



THE INDEPENDENT

ON SATURDAY

Saturday 3 January 1998 70p (IR65p) No 3,498

Yes, it was my son says Straw. But I'm as hard-line on drugs as ever

Jack Straw spoke of his embarrassment yesterday as he was finally identified as the father of the teenager alleged to have sold drugs to a journalist. Michael Streeter and Colin Brown say he will press on with his crusade against crime and to make parents take more responsibility for their children's actions.

The Home Secretary last night told of his "shock and concern" after learning that his son William faced an accusation of drug dealing after an undercover operation by the *Mirror* newspaper.

Mr Straw, who has spoken privately of his frustration over his enforced anonymity, said he was now "very relieved" to be able to speak out after the High Court lifted the ban on naming his son.

He agreed that his William, aged 17, who has been accepted for a place at Oxford University, ought to expect no favours from the legal system, but neither should he suffer more for being the son of a prominent politician.

"When the *Mirror* first spoke to me I felt the same emotions as any parent would do in such circumstances - those of shock and concern.

"Being a parent means giving love and support, and - when it's necessary - confronting children with their wrong-doing. When a child does wrong, I believe it to be the duty of a parent to act promptly," Mr Straw said.

His son had gone voluntarily with him to the police and would accept "any sanctions" which arise. He was "of course" embarrassed by this but it did not affect his ability to speak on law and order matters including drugs policy. Neither he nor Downing Street had ever considered him resigning, and last night the Prime Minister's office said he had Tony Blair's full support.

"I have always sought - and so have my colleagues - to conduct our family lives the same way as other people.

"These are experiences that other families have had and so it does not in any way affect my ability to talk on these matters."

The naming of Mr Straw as the father of the arrested youth

followed an agonising period in which, day by day, the secret trickled out in every bar, England and Wales.

After what one opposition MP called "slow torture" for Mr Straw's family, a High Court judge, Mr Justice Toulson, lifted an injunction which banned the media in this country from identifying the youth.

On the day that Scottish newspapers published the minister's identity, the judge asked "whether it was sensible or appropriate for the court to maintain opposition in which matters can be published in Greenock but not in Carlisle".

His lifting of an injunction - originally granted at the wish of the Attorney General on Tuesday when the *Sun* threatened to publish - brought to an end a period not just of uncertainty for the Straws, but also a time of growing confusion over the law.

Newspapers in France, Ireland and media all around the world had revealed the identity of Mr Straw who was not named when the *Mirror* broke the story on Christmas Eve claiming that one of their reporters had bought £10 of cannabis from his 17-year-old son, William.

William was arrested and released on police bail. Next week the Crown Prosecution Service will decide whether to prosecute. There are indications that a police file sent to the CPS believes that because of conflicts in evidence of what happened on the night there should be no further action, except possibly a caution for the youth. No decision has been made yet on the reporter who reportedly received the drugs, Dawn Alford, who was arrested and bailed by police on Monday.

Philip Havers QC, for the Attorney General John Morris, had argued at a private hearing yesterday that the injunction granted by Mr Justice Moses on Tuesday should be continued.

But Mr Justice Toulson said when Mr Justice Moses made his order, the identity of the boy was not widely known and it was now common ground that "there had been a major change of circumstances".

The judge said a French newspaper had used the names and they were also available on the Internet. "The question is whether the stage has now been reached where it would be artificial to pretend that anonymity can be preserved."

Saturday Star, page 13
Leading article, page 14



Jack Straw at the Home Office before yesterday's press conference

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

More Billy Whizz than Jack the Lad

The Christmas period should have been a particularly happy time for William Straw. He had just been accepted for a place at Oxford University - the letter arrived on Christmas Eve - to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics providing he gets the right grades in his A levels later this year.

Instead this news was completely overshadowed by events in a London pub, when he is alleged to have sold to £10 worth of cannabis to an undercover reporter for the *Mirror*, a chain reaction which led to yesterday's events.

Whatever the truth of those claims - and a decision will be made next week on whether he faces any prosecution - the boy who knows him describe William as a "decent, amusing young man". Looking like a trendier version of his father, the 17-year-old has a droll sense of humour, strong views of his own and, until this affair, had handled the difficulty of being a "famous son" very well. He has been interested in a career in journalism - though perhaps less so just at the moment.

His family nickname "Whizz", comes not, as has been suggested for drug-re-

lated reasons, but means "whizz-kid" given to him because he was sufficiently able at school to move up a year. Unlike other new Labour children, he has been educated at a comprehensive - Pinlicko school in south-west London, where he is studying for his A-levels. His father is chair of the board of governors.

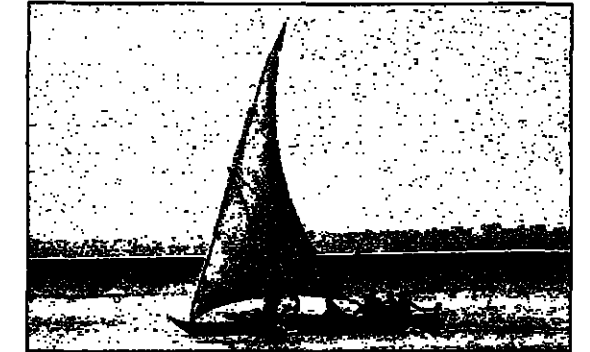
His mother is Alice Perkins, a deputy director of public spending at the Treasury, and he has one sister. The family spent Christmas at their Oxfordshire cottage.

— Michael Streeter
Legal Affairs Correspondent

IN TODAY'S PAPER



Twelve months, 12 holidays. The definitive package
MAGAZINE



Bask in the winter sun - but don't pay as much as the Blairs
TIME OFF

Plus: films, TV, theatre, clubs and music
THE EYE

How to become a Freelance Writer

by NICK DAVIS

Freelance writing can be creative, fulfilling and a lot of fun, with excellent money to be made as well. What's more, anyone can become a writer. No special qualifications or experience are required.

The market for writers is huge. In Britain alone there are around 1,000 daily, Sunday and weekly papers, and more than 8,000 magazines. Many of the stories and articles that they publish are supplied by freelancers. Then there are books, theatre, films, TV, radio...

With such demand, there's always room for new writers. But, as Mr. E. H. Metcalfe, principal of Britain's leading writing school The Writers Bureau, explains, "If you want to enjoy the rewards of seeing your work in print, one thing you must have is proper training."

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fiction and non-fiction writing. The 140,000 word course is written by professional writers and has been acclaimed by experts.

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Thinking of rushing to the sales to buy that computer? Think again

Thinking of braving the New Year sales to buy the PC that you denied yourself at Christmas? Don't: it may be worth hanging on a few months longer.

The reason is that sometime between April and June the software giant Microsoft plans to launch yet another version of its Windows operating system,

provisionally (if unimaginatively) named "Windows98". And if you want it on your machine then, you'll have to pay for it.

The news is another example of the relentless updating typical of the computer industry, which could put the fashion world to shame.

Most notably, computer

companies never seem to be able to time anything to coincide with Christmas. Last year Intel, which makes the chips that power most PCs, came under fire for delaying the launch of its MMX chip, especially able to handle the "multimedia" requirements of many games programs, until January.

At the time, the editor of

Computer Life magazine, Jan Howells, said: "I think people will be really annoyed. Intel plan a massive advertising campaign and Joe Public is going to say: 'Why wasn't I told about this before Christmas?'"

Microsoft is planning a blitz later this year - though the price of the software has not been decided. But a

spokesman yesterday did say that there will be no free upgrades: if your PC does not have Windows98 you will have to buy it.

The new product will integrate many pieces of software presently separate - such as the Windows95 operating system and Microsoft's Internet Explorer (IE) browser for surfing Web

sites. Indeed, testers who have tried Windows98 say that it seems to make every document or program resemble an extension of the Internet. For example, if a word-processing document contains a Web address (such as www.independent.co.uk) then clicking on it will launch IE and connect you to that site.

TODAY'S NEWS

Frank Muir dies

The veteran comedy writer and broadcaster Frank Muir died yesterday, aged 77. He died in bed after watching *Forrest Gump* on television, and commending the script. His wife said: "We watched the film together and he really enjoyed it." Report, Page 3; Barry Took, page 16

Gales on the way

Britain is bracing itself for another lashing from the weather, as the latest in a series of storms approaches from the west. Forecasters expect gales reaching 70mph to combine with driving rain today to produce the worst weather since Christmas Eve. Page 6

Ulster police move

Police action has been intensified in a move to foil loyalist attacks on Catholics in Ulster, the chief constable, Ronnie Flanagan, said. In a separate move, the terrorist suspect Roisin McAliskey was committed for extradition to Germany to face bomb charges. Page 4

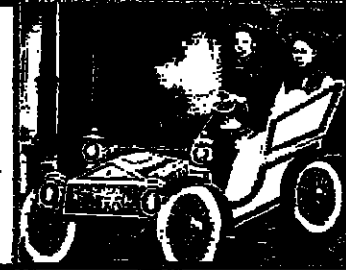
Weather Time Off, page 2
The Eye
Page 24 and
Time Off, page 12

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IN NEXT WEEK'S INDEPENDENT

TAKING CONTROL Feeling that your life is out of control is the biggest modern anxiety. From Monday and throughout next week we address the question of how to get your life under control. Don't start the week without it.



Exclusive: a century in photographs - 98 years, 98 pictures

Espionage mystery as riddle of sunken trawler unravels

An 'unsinkable' trawler went down 23 years ago with all 36 hands on board in mysterious circumstances. Colin Brown, Chief Political Correspondent, reports that the Government will pay for an underwater survey which could solve the enigma of the *Gaul*.

After a cover-up lasting nearly a quarter of a century surrounding the mysterious disappearance of the *Gaul*, an "unsinkable" high-tech factory trawler, ministers have decided to fund an underwater survey which could solve the mystery of how and why it went down with all hands on board.

Relatives of the 36 crew who lost their lives have been fighting since the ship was lost in 1974 for successive governments to find the sunken trawler and discover why it sank almost without trace, and without issuing a distress signal.

They suspect it may have been on a spying mission, during which it was sunk by a Soviet torpedo. Successive governments denied that trawlers were used for spying, although it was common knowledge around the port in Hull, where the deep sea fleet was based, that crews were routinely asked to report on Soviet submarine sightings. Just before Christmas, the Government admitted that there had been a cover-up.

Alan Johnson, one of the Hull MPs - who include John Prescott, now the Secretary of State responsible for shipping inquiries - who has campaigned for the Government to act, told the Commons in December

that Lord Rogers, then Labour's defence minister, wrote to the relatives in 1974 saying: "I can assure you that the British trawler fleet is not involved in any way in any intelligence gathering." That assurance was repeated in 1992.

The cover-up over the use of trawlers for spying ended when defence ministers admitted in written Commons answers last month that trawlers had been used "for specific intelligence gathering operations against the former Soviet navy" in the 1960s and early 1970s. Lord Rogers says he was misled.

"At the time there was also a scheme whereby Royal Navy officers gained sea going experience in merchant ships, including deep sea trawlers. All RN personnel were encouraged to report back any opportunity sightings of interest as indeed were the trawlers," said John Reid, the defence minister.

There was a suspicion among some of the *Gaul* families that ministers in previous governments had been reluctant to authorise the search for the *Gaul* because they feared its discovery would disclose the truth about its secret spying mission.

The only trace of the ship was a lifebuoy which was found some time after the trawler went missing. Ministers insisted that it would be too expensive to locate the vessel, and they refused to carry out a search. The families campaigned in vain until last year a survey was carried out for the Channel Four programme *Dispatches* at a cost of less than £50,000. Using reports of where the ship might have gone down and sonar technology, it was located in two days 270 meters down on the seabed in the Barents sea, 60 miles off the coast of Norway.

An inquiry into the loss of

the *Gaul* found that it was probably overwhelmed in heavy seas in a storm.

But in a Commons debate to plead for Government intervention last month, Mr Johnson said the *Gaul* was only two years old when it sank. Its safety features included a dual radar system, automatic steering, high quality radio and telegraphy equipment. It had an experienced skipper and crew, and the vessel and crew were familiar with Arctic conditions.

Underwater cameras found the *Gaul* almost intact, with all its windows in place, and it was facing into the direction of the prevailing weather at the time it disappeared.

Glenda Jackson, the transport minister, said there was no evidence that the *Gaul* had been sunk by enemy fire. "The fact that panes of glass were still intact and the absence of damage to the other parts rule out an explosion, high-impact damage or attack by any form of weapon," she said.

The Ministry of Defence said that the use of trawlers for counter-espionage ceased in 1973 - a year before the *Gaul* went down. Ms Jackson told the Commons the *Gaul* "played no part in intelligence-gathering activities".

The minister hinted that she would agree to a further survey of the vessel in the spring, when the weather improved.

The *Independent* has learned that the Deputy Prime Minister has authorised a new camera survey, costing around £100,000, of the *Gaul*. It will concentrate on the stern, where nets prevented the Channel Four cameras from a thorough search. The fresh survey may find that the stern "door" was left open and the vessel was overwhelmed by inrushing seas, like the ferry the *Herald of Free Enterprise*.



Under fire: Pierce Brosnan plays spy hero in the latest 007 spectacular *Tomorrow Never Dies*, while real-life espionage continues in a lower key

So who are our spies snooping on today?

When William Waldegrave, a former Foreign Office minister, spoke yesterday of "tapes of what some foreign leader said in his bath", he wasn't joking.

Britain's Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, would not hesitate to try to listen in on any conversation, intercept any mail or hack into any computer if it would give the country an edge over our competitors - even if they happen to be our friends.

Intelligence experts were staggered yesterday that anyone should be at all surprised at MI6 conducting secret operations against Britain's European Union partners.

"That's its job," said Nigel West, an intelligence historian. "The Secret Intelligence Service costs £900m a year and if it couldn't assist ministers in finding out what other states are up to, then it wouldn't be worth the money."

The targets in modern-day espionage, aside from drug trafficking and money laundering, are primarily political and economic rather than military. If a British minister has to enter negotiations with other countries, he wants to know what their positions will be before he enters the room.

If that means bugging the home of a senior foreign official or an EU commissioner, then, with ministerial permission, its operatives will do it.

They recruit contacts inside government departments and, using Britain's electronic listening station GCHQ, they pick up whatever conversations they can.

During the Seventies, in advance of a round of talks on the sovereignty of Gibraltar, a bug was found inside the private office of the Spanish prime minister. It is thought to have been put there by a British spy.

"Intelligence gathering does not have to be hostile and it can sometimes be to the benefit of

the country being observed," said Mr West.

"If we intercepted something which showed, for example, that French communication systems were not secure, then France would be grateful. But we have to listen in to make sure they are safe: there's no point in us sharing highly sensitive in-

formation with them if they're going to let it out. The process is controlled by the Joint Intelligence Committee, but a clandestine electronic eavesdropping operation would require personal approval from the Foreign Secretary.

An intelligence source, who asked not to be named, said:

"The minister would have to weigh the value of the information that might be gleaned against the potential embarrassment of being caught."

"But the other countries do it to us, too. It's all part of the game and the rewards for the winner can be immeasurable."

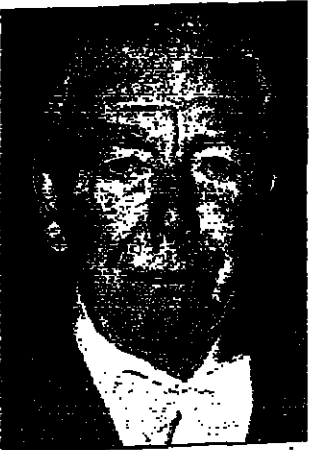
— Steve Boggan



Long haul: Hull MP Alan Johnson who backed the *Gaul* families. Photograph: John Voos

Frank Muir, a king of comedy, dies

Frank Muir, one of the great post-war television and radio comedy writers, died yesterday. David Lister reviews the career of a humorist who became disillusioned with the humour of today.



Frank Muir: Brought classic comedies to TV and radio

With his six-foot-six-inch frame, mellifluous voice, bright pink bow ties and bushy RAF moustache, Frank Muir, who died yesterday at the age of 77, is a figure etched in the memory of viewers of such television series as *Call My Bluff*.

But Muir's greatest talent was not in front of the cameras, but as one of the most successful comedy scriptwriters and producers of the television and radio age. His partnership with

Dennis Norden produced the radio sitcom classic *Take It From Here* and television series such as *Wacko*, as well as classic sketches for Peter Sellers.

After the Muir-Norden partnership ended in 1964 and Norden went on to take a greater

role in front of the cameras. Muir did some of his most important work, becoming assistant head of comedy for the BBC and then head of comedy for London Weekend Television. He became executive producer of such classics as *Hancock's Half Hour*, *Sleeping Partners*, *The Rag Trade*, *All Gas and Gaiters*, *Till Death Us Do Part*, *On the Buses*, *Please Sir!*, and *Not Only ... But Also*. He began scriptwriting during service in the Second World War when he became involved with broadcasting to the troops.

Frank Muir died in bed - hours after spending an evening watching the film *Forrest Gump* on television, and commending the script, his wife Polly, 72, said yesterday. "We watched the film together and he thoroughly enjoyed it," she said. "He maintained an interest in comedy writing to the end."

Mrs Muir said she was with her husband when he died, just after mid-day. She had since broken the news to their two children. Their son Jamie is a television arts producer and their daughter Sally, married to journalist Geoffrey Wheatcroft, has for 18 years been a designer of knitwear.

Muir's death comes three months after he published his memoirs, *A Kentish Lad*.

In a recent interview, Muir lamented the changes to both television comedy and television in general. He said: "I see some smartarse sitcom, like *Men Behaving Badly*, and then I see *Dad's Army*, or *Till Death Us Do Part* ... and the craftsmanship is infinitely greater." Dennis Norden said yesterday: "He was like a brother to me. Nothing is adequate to express my feelings."

Obituary by Barry Took, page 16

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Mowlam steps up security in Ulster

As 150 Republican and Loyalist inmates released on parole for Christmas filed back into the Maze high security prison yesterday, the RUC announced that troops were being ordered back onto the streets of Ulster. Louise Jury in Belfast heard Mo Mowlam back a new security clampdown

Describing the factional killing and worsening security situation in the province as "serious" but "not out of control", Mo Mowlam, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, insisted she was not intending to resign. Instead she announced the stepping up of security and an extended investigation into operational policy at the Maze.

Just one month after day-time military patrols in support of the police were stopped, RUC chiefs decided to reintroduce them when necessary as part of fresh measures to try to thwart hit-and-run loyalist gunmen shooting Catholics in revenge for the INLA murder of Loyalist Volunteer Force chief, Billy Wright.

After separate attacks which left two Catholics dead and up to a dozen more injured in Belfast and Dungannon, the fear now is that a vicious tit-for-tat shooting war could erupt between rival loyalist and republican factions not on ceasefire. The doomsday scenario envisages other groups being drawn into the fray, including the IRA, which is sticking to its truce.

Last night, Ms Mowlam announced that she would hold an urgent round of meetings with leaders of all the main political

parties in Belfast, starting next Monday, in advance of the resumption of the Stormont negotiations on 12 January.

Speaking after talks with Ronnie Flanagan, the Royal Ulster Constabulary chief constable, Ms Mowlam also backed the setting up of security patrols. She said she had repeatedly expressed her desire to see a reduction in security activity and a return to normality as soon as possible.

But she said they had been able to increase security very quickly in response to the "irresponsible, cruel and utterly futile" acts of recent violence.

"The deplorable events of the past few days have raised fears in both communities. Real fears which do not go away easily," she said.

"We as government will do all we can to make sure these fears are not realised. The best day to do this and to establish confidence is by making the talks process work. The situation now is serious but it is not out of control."

Ronnie Flanagan appealed for the public's help in preventing further attacks.

"We have had dreadful murders in recent days and sadly I cannot say that is the last murder we are going to witness. But it must be kept in proportion."

Doormen and former IRA prisoner Seamus Dillon, 46, was shot within hours of the murder of Billy Wright. Eddie Treanor, 31, a civil servant with no Republican ties, was murdered in a bar on New Year's Eve.

The Loyalist Volunteer Force claimed responsibility for both attacks although suspicions have been raised that more mainstream loyalist paramilitaries such as the Ulster Defence Association might have helped the LVF carry out Wednesday's attack.



Bernadette McAliskey outside Bow Street magistrates' yesterday after her daughter Roisin was committed for extradition Photograph: PA

Court commits McAliskey for extradition

The IRA terrorist suspect Roisin McAliskey was yesterday committed for extradition to Germany to face bombing charges.

Nicholas Evans, stipendiary magistrate sitting at Bow Street Court in central London, gave the go-ahead.

Her lawyers said the decision will clear the way for Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to decide on extensive legal arguments urging him to stop the extradition.

Miss McAliskey, 26, is wanted by German authorities as an alleged member of an IRA unit that mortared a British Army barracks in Osnabruck in June 1996.

During a 20-minute hearing, Mr Evans told the court: "In the particular circumstances of this case, bearing in mind McAliskey's state of

health, I now commit her on her absence to await the decision of the Secretary of State about her extradition to Germany."

Her supporters, many of whom were outside court waving banners protesting her innocence, claim that since her arrest 14 months ago, police and prosecutors have yet to establish her whereabouts at the time of the bombing.

They argue that there is a "mass" of documentary and eye-witness evidence confirming her presence in Northern Ireland on the dates when the woman sought by the police was sighted in Germany.

McAliskey, who denies any involvement in the mortar attack, was arrested at her home in Coalisland, Co Tyrone, in November 1996 when

pregnant, and was detained as a high-risk prisoner in Holloway and Belmarsh Prisons in London. Last May, three days before her baby was born, she was released on bail by a High Court Judge and has been staying at a mother-and-baby unit at the Maudsley Hospital, south London, where she is being treated for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Yesterday's bail was granted on the condition that she resides 24 hours a day in a hospital mother-and-baby unit; that a surety of £100,000 is taken; that a £95,000 security is deposited with solicitors; and that she agrees to consent to all future medical and psychiatric reports.

Included in the five sureties totalling £100,000 was £30,000 given by the writer and broadcaster Jeremy

Hardy. Lin Solomon, a human rights campaigner, also provided a surety of £30,000 in court.

Speaking outside court, Mr Hardy said he was not particularly optimistic about Mr Straw's forthcoming decision. "We fear that the Government is so desperate to please loyalists that they will use Roisin as a sacrifice. I am not optimistic, but Mr Straw has evidence that Roisin is unwell and evidence that she is innocent."

Afterwards, Miss McAliskey's mother, the former mid-Ulster MP Bernadette McAliskey, who was in court, said they were now eagerly awaiting Mr Straw's decision.

"My daughter is innocent," she said. "She is not charged with any offence and I believe we will resolve this matter fairly."

Companies must open staff files

Soon you will have the right to look at every scrap of personal information your boss holds on you. Barrie Clement, Labour Editor, hears advice that companies should make an early start on "spring cleaning" their records or face the threat of legal action from employees.

It is a rare manager who harbours no ill will to at least some of his staff. In future, however, he or she would do well to keep derogatory opinions about employees to themselves - or at least refrain from committing them to paper.

Within the next few weeks, ministers intend to publish the Data Protection Bill, which will substantially enhance workers' rights to scrutinise their personal records, get them put right if necessary and in cases of serious error, enable them to take their bosses to court. Some managers routinely keep notes on staff which accuse them of a wide range of social unpleasanties from being a habitual fibber to being the main source of office odours.

More seriously, records may contain accusations of kleptomania or sexual harassment. Unless there is proof of such unlawful activities, an organisation could find itself embroiled in a libel suit.

Records may contain inaccurate information which affects an employee's pay, promotion and prospects, says Angela Edward, a policy adviser at the Institute of Personnel Development. "Employees will have the right to know what information employees keep on them and how it is used," she said.

Workers are already protected under the 1984 Data Protection Act, but its provisions cover computer records only. Under this law, there is no financial redress, simply a right to have information corrected where necessary. The legislation was, however, seen to be inadequate under European directives and the current Bill has been drawn up with a view to introducing stricter rules by October.

Warning that there could be serious financial implications for employers found keeping inaccurate information, Ms Edward advised companies "to act now". She emphasised the need for employees to check information that had been gathered, particularly informal records.

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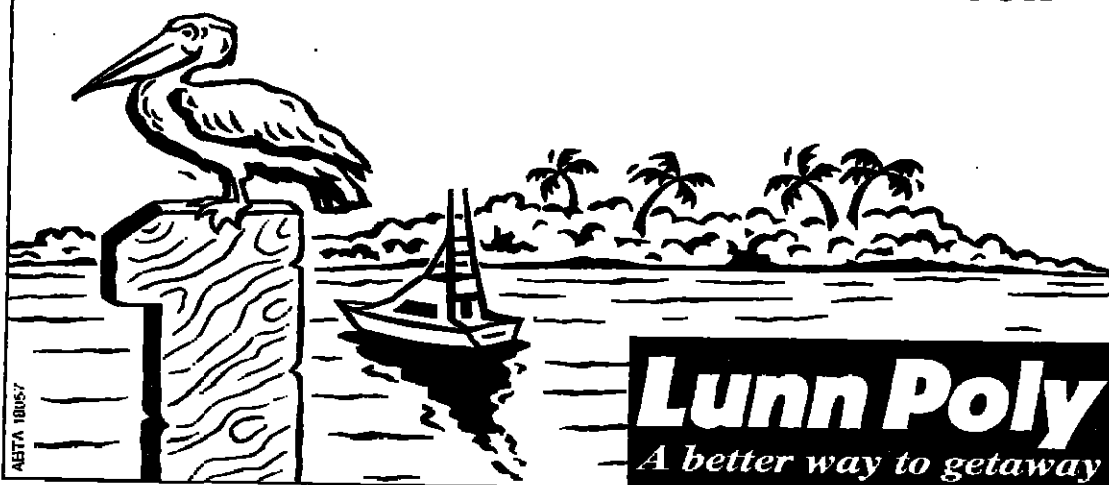


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Rapist may have put drug in woman's drink

A woman who was raped near a nightclub may have accepted a drink which had been spiked, police said yesterday.

Officers are investigating the possibility that the woman was fed the so-called "date-rape drug" Rohypnol, which incapacitates women to the point where they are unable to resist their attackers.

The 20-year-old woman told police that, two days before Christmas, she accepted an offer of a drink from a man at the Rumburgh nightclub in London's Trocadero Centre, but felt ill soon after drinking it. She went outside into the street, and believes she was then followed outside, where she was raped, possibly by more than one man.

The victim then wandered the streets "in a confused state" for several hours before going home, where she told friends what had happened. They then called the police.

A Scotland Yard spokeswoman said: "Tests showed she did not have an excessive level of alcohol in her bloodstream, so it is quite possible she may have been drugged. Toxicology tests are being done... but we must keep an open mind."

Rohypnol, nicknamed Roofie, is a legal anaesthetic 10 times more powerful than Valium sometimes prescribed for back pain. It is manufactured by Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche and is not available through the NHS, although it is sold in private clinics.

Last month, a charity was set up, the Roofie Foundation, to combat misuse of the drug which is claimed to have been used on hundreds of women in the UK and the US, where it is now illegal.

To combat the threat, Roche is developing a new tablet form which turns a bright blue colour when dissolved in any liquid.

The man who bought the woman the drink is described as white, about 6 ft tall, and of medium build. Anyone with any information can call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Video burglars put themselves in the frame

Burglars who videoed themselves committing more than 30 crimes were horrified when their films went on general release - to the police. Surprised officers discovered the tapes during a routine search at one of the men's homes in Glascoate, Tamworth, Staffordshire.

The tapes, which were edited, subtitled and dubbed with music, showed burglaries, vandalism and breaking and entering.

Detective Constable Nick Longman of Tamworth CID said the police found the tapes while they were investigating an unrelated matter and suspicions were aroused by the titles. "Some interest was expressed about the videos because of their titles and officers' suspicions were aroused when they tried to keep them away from them," he said.

"I've never come across anything like this before. They must have some equipment somewhere as they've done a proper job, but I don't think they'll be doing it again in a hurry. I think they've learnt their lesson."

Mr Longman said the pair had filmed each other breaking into derelict and unfinished properties, smashing up buildings and committing burglaries.

The men, who have not been named, are in their 20s, and have been bailed while investigations continue.

Farm arsonist starts three fires in 24 hours

A farm arsonist is feared to have started three more blazes in the last 24 hours. Fifteen blazes have now been started since September on farms in south-east Cornwall - with damage estimated about £750,000.

Now there are fears that farmers may turn to vigilante action to catch the arsonist. Anthony Gibson, regional director of the National Farmers' Union, said yesterday: "Farmers are so angry there is talk of organising shotgun patrols."

Keith Barrett, whose barn was set ablaze yesterday, said that some farmers who found someone on their property "will act first and ask questions afterwards".

Mr Barrett, who farms near Duloe, went on: "It could be life at risk next time." The fire was only yards from occupied holiday cottages.

Half an hour earlier, a store and contents were destroyed by fire three miles away at Pelynt, near Looe. And on New Year's Day £50,000 worth of damage was caused in another barn fire at Kellow farm, near Looe, said the police.

Chitty Chitty Bang Bang

The owner of Chitty Chitty Bang Bang is to meet with engineering experts to investigate ways of making the famous car more environmentally friendly.

Nearly 30 years after the film starring Dick Van Dyke and Sally Ann Howes made the vehicle famous, Pierre Picton plans to meet with engineers at Ford to discuss ways of converting the car, powered by a 3-litre Ford V6, to run on unleaded fuel. Speaking from his home in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, Mr Picton said the car, which runs on four-star, could be converted in time for its 30th birthday celebrations later this year. He said: "When the engine's done she will be more environmentally friendly and that will be better for all the children that come to see her."

BBC pulls plug on Noel's House Party

Mystery surrounded the cancellation of the BBC's flagship entertainment show *Noel's House Party* yesterday when the plug was pulled on this evening's show just 24 hours before it was to be broadcast.

The BBC would only say it was "due to circumstances beyond our control".

"Television industry rumours immediately started to circulate that the programme had been cancelled after a dispute between Mr Edmonds and the BBC over the format and production of the show."

The BBC even refused to comment on whether the high-rating show would be back next week or ever again.

Edmonds was not available for comment. Inquiries were referred back to the BBC.

Edmonds owns the format of the programme and is said to have full control. In November, he stepped in to replace the producer.

He was quoted as saying: "By my standards, the show was not as good as it should have been."

A source close to Edmonds said last night: "Noel is fine - he has not been sacked."

The BBC will repeat *The Best of Noel's House Party* instead. Tonight's programme had already been promoted along with the rest of the evening's schedule.

Edmonds is one of the BBC's most popular personalities and figured heavily in its Christmas schedule. His *House Party* regularly tops 10 million viewers and is one of the BBC's few shows that can compete with Cilla Black's *Blind Date* on ITV. Combined with *Casualty*, *Noel's House Party* has regularly helped the BBC to win the battle for audience share on Saturday nights.

If the show is gone for good, it will blow a major hole in its programming schedule and would make a tempting format for ITV.

— Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

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Gales roar in at 70mph to bring a week of rain

Torrential rain and gales reaching 70mph battered western parts of Britain yesterday, unleashing havoc on travellers and householders.

South-west England, the North and Scotland were hardest-hit by the heavy winds. Among the casualties was a 22,000-tonne tanker which was blown onto the rocks off the coast of Devon, sending trees crashing down and blacking out hundreds of homes.

Cross-Channel sailings between Newhaven and Dieppe were cancelled and there were several road accidents as motorists struggled to control their vehicles on rain-soaked roads. A mother from Cirencester, Gloucestershire, was being treated in hospital yesterday after the family's car was in collision with another vehicle during 70mph gales. Her parents and baby, who were also in the car, were killed in what police described as "a head-on collision in appalling weather".

The ferocious winds are expected to die down tomorrow, but forecasters warned

that rain and showers will continue across the country into next week. The only consolation is that the torrential rain has at last eased the threat of another severe drought in the South-east this year. Some areas have had more than one and a half inches of rain in just 24 hours and reservoirs in Kent and Sussex are almost full.

At the beginning of the autumn, the Environment Agency warned that one-and-a-half times the normal amount of rainfall would be needed in Kent and East Sussex to stave off the threat of drought this year. A spokesman said yesterday: "That rainfall has now arrived. The aquifers - natural underground reservoirs - which over 70 per cent of the region relies upon for its water supplies have started at long last to recover." The agency also urged people not to dump their Christmas trees into water courses. "In the past trees thrown away in this fashion have caused blockages to grilles and other river structures which in turn has led to flooding," a spokesman said.

— Clare Garner



Wild water: People dodging the waves to walk on the Cobb at Lyme Regis yesterday

Photograph: Richard Austin

Advertisers stir up a war with BBC

A television ratings war is set to break out after powerful advertisers urged the ITV network to measure itself only against the BBC. Paul McCann, Media Correspondent, explains the background to the battle for our control buttons.

ITV has been issued with a warning from advertising agencies to boost its falling ratings by taking on the BBC rather than trying to compete with Channel 4 and Channel 5.

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, the trade body for the advertising and media-buying industry, has asked ITV's new chief executive Richard Eyre to create a "benchmark" level of ITV viewing figures against the BBC.

When Mr Eyre joined ITV from Capital Radio in the autumn he asked advertisers to give him 100 days to devise a strategy for ITV's revival. He will be presenting that strategy later this month.

While he is believed to be planning an assault on BBC1 in particular, Mr Eyre is thought to be unwilling to set a specific target for taking viewers from the BBC because of the likelihood of the BBC raising its game in response.

Mr Eyre has prepared for taking on the BBC by stealing a number of ideas and senior broadcasters from the corporation, including Grant Tinker, the man behind "real people" programme successes such as *The Driving School* and *Ant and Dec's Night Night*. He has also hired David Baddiel and Frank Skinner to present a World Cup version of

their popular *Fantasy Football*. Advertisers are pressing for the assault on the BBC because ITV's share of viewing has fallen rapidly in the last five years to under 34 per cent as satellite and cable channels have stolen viewers. While ITV has been slipping the BBC has managed to hold onto its share of about 41 per cent when both BBC 1 and BBC 2 are added together.

The IPA is worried that ITV may try to bolster its audience share by taking viewers from Channel 4 and Channel 5 rather than the BBC. They are against this because it does nothing to increase the total number of viewers who see their adverts. Advertisers pay for airtime on ITV in a bizarre way that means they pay more per viewer as ratings fall, and they have seen their media costs rise well above the rate of inflation over the last three years.

Mr Eyre was appointed by ITV and given sweeping executive powers following criticism from advertisers that the network's federal system meant big players such as Carlton, Granada and United News & Media were competing more with each other than with external rivals.

As competition from new broadcasters has eaten into their audience share commercial broadcasters have become increasingly angry about what they see as the polarisation of the BBC's schedules. ITV and some of its advertisers have criticised the BBC for winning a renewal of its Charter by promising distinct programming not seen on other channels. Instead, they argue, the BBC is competing directly with commercial channels with mass-market soap operas, games shows and fly on the wall "real people" television programmes.

Street crime wave blamed on truants

Forty per cent of all street robberies and a third of car thefts and burglaries in London are committed by truants, it emerged yesterday.

Now Tony Blair is to launch a campaign against truants after being shown evidence of a youngsters' crime wave. Studies have revealed that the culprits are mainly boys who lose interest in lessons because of poor literacy skills.

The Prime Minister has ordered the Downing Street social exclusion unit - set up last month to devise new solutions to the problems of poverty - to think up new ways to tackle truancy. Sir Paul Condon, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, told the unit that most of the offences took place during school hours, according to reports.

The unit was also shown figures from the Basic Skills Agency which reveal low educational standards among offenders aged 17-25. Interviews with 500 such offenders showed

21 per cent could not write their name and address properly. A further 48 per cent could not write their name and address and give more than two pieces of information about themselves without making mistakes. About half had difficulty telling the time and giving the days of the week or the months of the year in the right order. Only 30 per cent could fill in a job application form.

The survey was carried out through interviews with offenders from towns and rural areas in Shropshire. About 90 per cent said they had been truants at some stage during their school career and 64 per cent said they were habitual truants, absent for a day or more a week soon after starting secondary school.

The average age when truancy started was 12 to 13, and 55 per cent said they committed crimes while absent from the classroom.

Trevor Phillips, page 15

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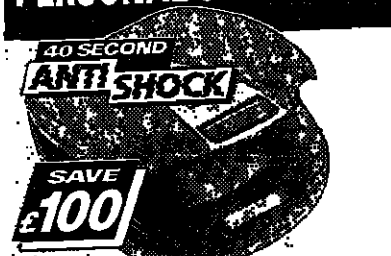
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Writing on the wall: Election graffiti and a peeling poster for Daniel arap Moi in Nairobi yesterday. President Moi is favourite to win

Photograph: Corinne Dufka/Reuters

Kaunda's lawyers demand speedy trial or release

Lawyers for the former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, accused of fomenting a failed coup in October, yesterday demanded in a Lusaka court an easing of his house arrest and a speedy trial, or his release.

Britain, meanwhile, cancelled the Foreign Office minister Tony Lloyd's trip to Zambia to protest against the government's actions. "It would be wrong for me to visit so long as Mr Kaunda remains in custody but uncharged, and in the absence of a commitment from the Zambian authorities that I will be able to see him," Mr Lloyd said.

At the court, Mr Kaunda, 73, said the government, not he, was on trial and urged his backers not to be bitter. By speaking, he may have technically violated the terms of his house arrest, which forbid him from participating in political activities and speaking to the media. — AP, Lusaka

Burundi deaths rise to 284

Troops were still combing the area around Burundi's Bujumbura airport yesterday as the death toll in a bloody rebel attack on Thursday rose to at least 284.

Army spokesman Lieutenant-Colonel Mamet Sinarinzi said that the dead included 180 civilians, 100 rebels and four Burundi army soldiers. An estimated 1,000 Hutu rebels launched the dawn attack near the village of Rukaramu, a few kilometres north of Bujumbura, the most daring assault on the Burundi capital since military ruler Pierre Buyoya seized power in an army coup in July 1996.

The attackers appeared to be part of a broader alliance of Burundian and Rwandan Hutu rebel groups, but most of the dead were former Rwandan army soldiers. Lt-Col Sinarinzi said. — Reuters, Nairobi

Tribal rifts wreck Kenya's chance to throw out Moi

Daniel arap Moi appears to have achieved the victory he sought in Kenya's elections. But Ed O'Loughlin in Nairobi asks whether this will simply deepen the crisis in the country.

Amid all the sound and fury of this week's elections in Kenya one remarkable story of human achievement has gone almost unnoticed.

On Tuesday it was announced that Humphrey Ochiu Makasembo, a candidate for the National Development Party, had trounced his four rivals to win the Uruba ward seat on Migori town council. For Mr Makasembo it was a triumph over the greatest of handicaps: three weeks before the polls opened on Monday, he died.

Mr Makasembo's victory from the grave was by no means the only strange thing about this week's elections. By the time the polls closed all the main parties contesting the parallel presidential, parliamentary and civic elections — including the ruling Kenyan African National Union — were claiming to be the victims of impersonation, ballot-stuffing, vote-buying and intimidation. All alleged that the electoral commission's gross bungling, which caused many polling stations to open late or not at all on Monday, was part of an anti-democratic conspiracy against them.

The two leading opposition figures, Raila Odinga and fellow presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki, yesterday reject-

ed the preliminary results which showed Mr Moi would be swept back into power, and called for a new poll within 21 days.

With counting continuing yesterday, unofficial figures from 166 of the 210 constituencies showed President Moi comfortably leading his nearest rival, Democratic Party candidate Mr Kibaki, by 1,974,871 votes to 1,633,597. His share of the vote was 39.2 per cent — a surprise increase on his 36 per cent in 1992.

But even if the elections were really free and fair, the late Mr Makasembo's story shows that there are still deep flaws in Kenyan democracy.

Mr Makasembo posthumously topped the poll because his name appeared on the ballot paper beside the tractor symbol of Mr Odinga's National Development Party.

Mr Odinga is a member of the Luo tribe, the second largest in Kenya, and like all major Kenyan parties, his NDP is really little more than an ethnic caucus. Migori is in the Luo heartland of Nyanza province. Had the NDP nominated a

dead donkey in Mr Makasembo's stead it too would have come in at a canter. In fact the NDP took every seat in Migori.

Ethnic and regional considerations dominate Kenyan politics to the exclusion of virtually everything else.

In the 1992 election, for example, candidates Kenneth Matiba and Mwai Kibaki, both members of Kenya's largest tribe, the Kikuyu, won 95 per cent of the vote in the Kikuyu-dominated Central Province, but only 23 per cent in Rift Valley, stronghold of President Moi's Kalenjin tribal alliance. Raila Odinga won 75 per cent of the vote in his Luo-dominated Nyanza province but only 1 per cent in Central. Early figures from this year's poll show the same massive regional imbalances.

This year there was some excitement when Charity Ngilu became the first woman to make a serious bid for the presidency. As a member of the small Kamba tribe it was felt she might win votes from women of all ethnicities and from men sick of the tribal deadlock. This has not

materialised. Early figures put Mrs Ngilu a poor fifth, with most of her votes coming from her native Eastern province.

Her main significance now is as a potential spoiler. To be re-elected Mr Moi needs to win 25 per cent of the vote in five of Kenya's eight provinces and Mrs Ngilu's candidacy threatens to deprive him of a substantial block of the Kamba vote in one of the five provinces which he won last time. Unofficial figures suggest that he may reach the target in seven provinces — a result which the opposition is certain to reject as fraudulent.

For the past 19 years Mr Moi's great skill as a ruler has been to play off the three largest tribes — the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya — against each other while maintaining the support of the smaller peoples.

Although most members of the larger tribes now detest Mr Moi's government for its corruption and misrule, they still seem unable to unite to get rid of him. In 1992, despite claims of massive Kanu vote-buying and suggestions of serious irregularities, Mr Moi won only 36 per cent of the vote but still won easily.

This time around the opposition vote is split amongst 14 presidential candidates and 22 would-be parliamentary parties.

With political tensions running high across the country and all sides condemning the election as flawed and rigged, Kenya's battered reputation as East Africa's richest and most stable country seems destined to suffer a further blow. Mr Makasembo, wherever he is now, may feel he is better off out of it.

MYSTERY DISEASE KILLS 250

Ten days after it was first reported, health authorities in Kenya are still struggling to identify a mysterious epidemic which has killed 250 people in the flood-stricken north-east.

Symptoms include fever, headaches and haemorrhaging from body orifices, symptoms identified in thousands of livestock also reported to have died in recent days. The Kenyan representative of the World Health Organisation, Dr Douglas Klauka, said the authorities now believe the disease could be caused by anthrax, a bacterium tested by several countries — including Britain — for use in germ warfare. But he stressed that the samples were still being tested for Rift Valley fever. — Ed O'Loughlin

Namibia's bushmen threatened with oppression by black government

The past couple of centuries have not been kind to the Kxoe-speaking San, or 'bushmen', of north-eastern Namibia. Ed O'Loughlin found out why their problems have got worse since the country became independent.

The descendants of free-ranging hunter-gatherers, Namibia's remaining 4,000 Kxoe now live in sprawling resettlement camps inside the West Caprivi game reserve, the shrivelled heart of their traditional hunting range.

No longer able to hunt or wander in the old manner, they have fallen prey to all the predictable 20th-century social scourges — unemployment, alcoholism, malnutrition, violent crime and disease, including a rapidly-worsening epidemic of HIV. Yet what preoccupies them most at present is not these modern afflictions, but a new threat from an old enemy.

The powerful chief of a neighbouring Bantu-speaking tribe, which once enslaved the Kxoe, is claiming that they are still his vassals and that the land they currently occupy is his. And the democratically elected government of the South West Africa

people's Organisation (Swapo), which wrested independence from apartheid South Africa in 1989, seems to be supporting the chief's feudal claim.

At the centre of the dispute is a small tourist campsite built by the Kxoe on the Okavango River's Pops Falls to raise funds for development. Constructed at the beginning of this year with the help of Western donors and local development agencies, the campsite was condemned from the outset by Chief Erwin Mbambo, leader of the neighbouring Mbukushu tribe, on the grounds that his permission had not been sought.

The Kxoe ignored him, saying the Mbukushu chiefs had no jurisdiction east of the Okavango River. But then in May, the government abruptly announced that the camp would have to go: the prison ministry, it said, needed the stretch of scenic riverbank along the east of the falls to expand a neighbouring penal farm.

Since then the Kxoe's campsite has become a cause célèbre for Namibian and environmental and social activists and a rallying point for the divided and demoralised Kxoe people.

They claim that key figures within the government are really acting at the behest of the Mbukushu chief, Erwin Mbambo, a

former Swapo exile with close ties to senior government leaders. If not, they ask, why is the government ignoring the hundreds of Mbukushu peasants who have settled within the reserve over the past two years, illegally grazing cattle and burning off bush for planting?

Many Kxoe also believe that elements within Swapo are trying to punish them for taking the wrong side in the Namibian liberation struggle. Between 1975 and 1989, the South African army used attractive wages and racial propaganda to persuade thousands of "Bushman" soldiers to serve as trackers and reconnaissance troops along the Angolan border.

"They say to us, 'We remember you when you were killing us,'" said Kipi George, elected chief of the Caprivi Kxoe. "Every tribal group in Namibia has members who fought against Swapo, but we are the only ones who are being blamed."

For many San, apartheid was not a black and white matter. South Africa's own San were wiped out by two centuries of white genocide — Bushmen were hunted for trophies up until the beginning of this century — but elsewhere in southern Africa many aboriginal San found a more immediate threat in the well-organised Bantu farmers who began arriving there 2,000 years ago.

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Rats tested for killer bird flu after eating dumped poultry

The World Health Organisation has started testing dogs, cats and rats in Hong Kong to find out whether the mysterious bird flu has spread to other animals.

The tests were revealed as the Hong Kong government came under increasing fire for its handling of the poultry cull which destroyed 1.4 million chickens, geese, ducks, pigeons and quail.

The tests on other animals were ordered after it became apparent that the authorities had left large bags of dead chickens in various places where they were seized and eaten by dogs, cats and rats.

Television pictures of dead chickens being carried away by scavenging dogs have added to a mood of public unease about the handling of the slaughter. It was supposed to take 24 hours but ended up lasting four days. Even after it was supposed to

be over there were reports of poultry farms waiting for officials to complete their task.

While the cull was underway, government officials were seen supervising the killing of poultry in the markets wearing full protective clothing, but those actually killing the birds were doing so with bare hands, surrounded by blood and large numbers of scared birds.

The aim was to try and cut off the flu at its source. The death toll from the H5N1 virus has now reached 4 out of 15 confirmed and 6 suspected cases.

Yesterday the Executive Council, or cabinet of the Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa, met in emergency session to discuss the bird flu crisis. Beforehand one of the councillors, Tam Yiu-chung, publicly criticised the government's handling of the cull. He said decisions over the slaughter might have been

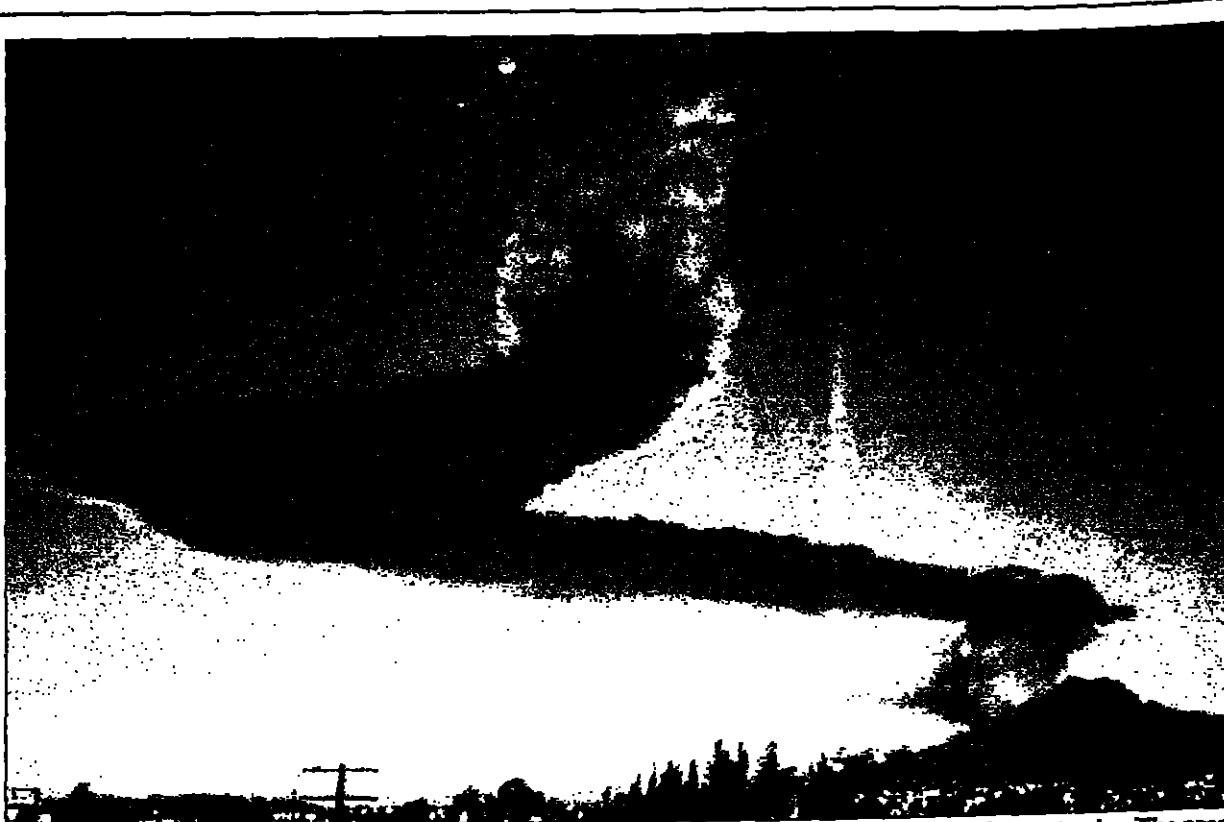
made with undue haste. "Preparation or evaluation therefore was not sufficient," he said.

After the meeting Mr Tung admitted that there had been "inadequacies" in the government's actions and said "improvements need to be made". He promised that this would be "sorted out some time today".

Researchers have been unable to establish how a strain of flu previously only found in poultry is transmitted to humans. A bigger concern is whether the virus can be transmitted between humans.

Experts from the WHO believe the risks of human to human transmission are minimal because the virus, although potentially lethal once it takes root in victims, has weak powers of transmission. However, the virus may be mutating and gaining strength.

— Stephen Vines



New Year blow-out: Smoke from the volcano Popocatepetl rising over Puebla in southern Mexico yesterday. The area is on alert after the 17,922ft peak erupted on Thursday, spewing out smoke and ash. Photograph: Ulises Ruiz/AFP

Cuban exile lays down law on US entry

A Cuban baseball star who was given special clearance to enter the United States after escaping to the Bahamas is refusing to take up the offer until his fellow passengers are also allowed into the US.

Orlando Hernandez, whose baseball-star brother, Liván, found fame and fortune in the US after defecting from Cuba two years ago, was one of eight passengers on a small boat picked up by US coastguards in Bahamas waters this week. Within 36 hours, he, his girlfriend and another baseball player were told they could enter the US. The other five were detained pending repatriation to Cuba.

The case highlights the use of discretion in US asylum policy towards Cubans and the exceptions made for sporting and entertainment figures.

— Mary Dejevsky

Sonia brings Gandhi magic to India poll

The decision by Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi's widow, to campaign for the Congress Party has galvanised India's latest general election, writes Peter Popham in Delhi. But the outcome of the voting is almost certain to be another coalition.

The world's biggest democracy will begin voting in its general election on 16 February, the election commissioners in Delhi announced. So vast is the area that polling in India's 543 constituencies will take place over four separate days, finishing on 7 March, and counting will begin two days after that.

It is less than two years since Indians last voted in a government, and the result was so inconclusive that there have since been three prime ministers, the first of whom held power for only 13 days.

But the coming election is shaping up to have at least more human interest than the last one, thanks to Sonia Gandhi's decision last week to campaign on behalf of Congress.

As the only politically active member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty which has governed India for most of its first 50 years, her decision immediately changed the complexion of the contest. Until then the Hindu nationalist BJP, long the "fascist" or "communist" bogeyman of Indian politics, seemed to be heading for its first real breakthrough.

In 1996 the BJP won 177 seats, more than any other party and 42 more than Congress — but with its high-minded refusal to enter alliances with regional or caste parties, it found itself some 70 seats short of a majority.

In recent months it has jettisoned its claim to purity and entered the same horse-trading as the other parties. As a result it has spread tentacles into the east and south where previously the BJP's message of Hinduism,

Mother India and economic reform meant little.

Then on New Year's Eve the most famous enigma of Indian politics, Rajiv Gandhi's widow Sonia, finally played her hand, and changed everything.

Although she has lived in India for 30 years, she has never played any active part in politics, and the assassinations of her husband and her mother-in-law, Indira, make her security on the stump a fearful problem. She is, of course, Italian by birth and upbringing. Yet few people doubt her participation will improve Congress's prospects.

"She was never created by God to win elections," said one local analyst. "After 30 years of living here her Hindi is still awful. But this is an electorate where every second person is illiterate, where only a fraction of people read newspapers, which has worshipped idols for thousands of years and which has been dominated by Congress for decades. Of course she will make a difference."

Much may depend on how many constituencies she is able to visit and how many voters are going to be moved by having seen the living legend. Congress's problem has been that its president, the octogenarian Sitaram Kesri, lacks popular appeal, and the party is essentially leaderless. In a recent opinion poll, Mrs Gandhi was the second choice for prime minister, behind the BJP incumbent Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Her inexperience makes it unlikely that she would be thrust into such a role. She was yesterday making supportive noises about Dr Manmohan Singh, an economist and a popular finance minister who drove through the reforms of 1991 that transformed the country's economic prospects. A Sikh, it is argued he would pose a serious challenge to Mr Vajpayee.

The one thing almost certain, however, is that there will be another coalition. With more than one-third of voters supporting minority parties, the days of national party dominance seem to be gone for good.

Roman town unearthed

Archaeologists have unearthed the ruins of a Roman town built during Emperor Nero's reign in southern Egypt, an antiquities official said yesterday.

A four-year excavation by Canadian and Egyptian archaeologists has revealed two-storey homes, said Mohammed el-Saghir, the director-general for southern Egyptian antiquities. The town lies in an area called Esment el-Kharab, near the Dakla Oasis, 550km (341 miles) south-west of Cairo, Mr el-Saghir added. The buildings were "in good condition", despite having been erected in the first century AD.

— AP, Cairo

Emu warning for Germans

An economics professor preparing a court bid to delay the launch of Europe's single currency warned Germans yesterday that they had most to lose from monetary union.

"Germany would have to fear the most negative consequences," Wilhelm Hankel, of Frankfurt university, told Saar radio, adding that the chances were high that the new currency, the euro, would be unstable. Mr Hankel and three other academics are preparing to lodge a complaint against Emu with the Federal Constitutional Court, the highest in Germany, in a bid to delay the launch due on 1 January 1999.

— Reuters, Bonn



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In pursuit of the perfect moment

Three years ago Jason Rebello, rising star of the new Brit Jazz scene, quit playing to become a Buddhist monk. Now he's back. Phil Johnson meets the man behind the press release.

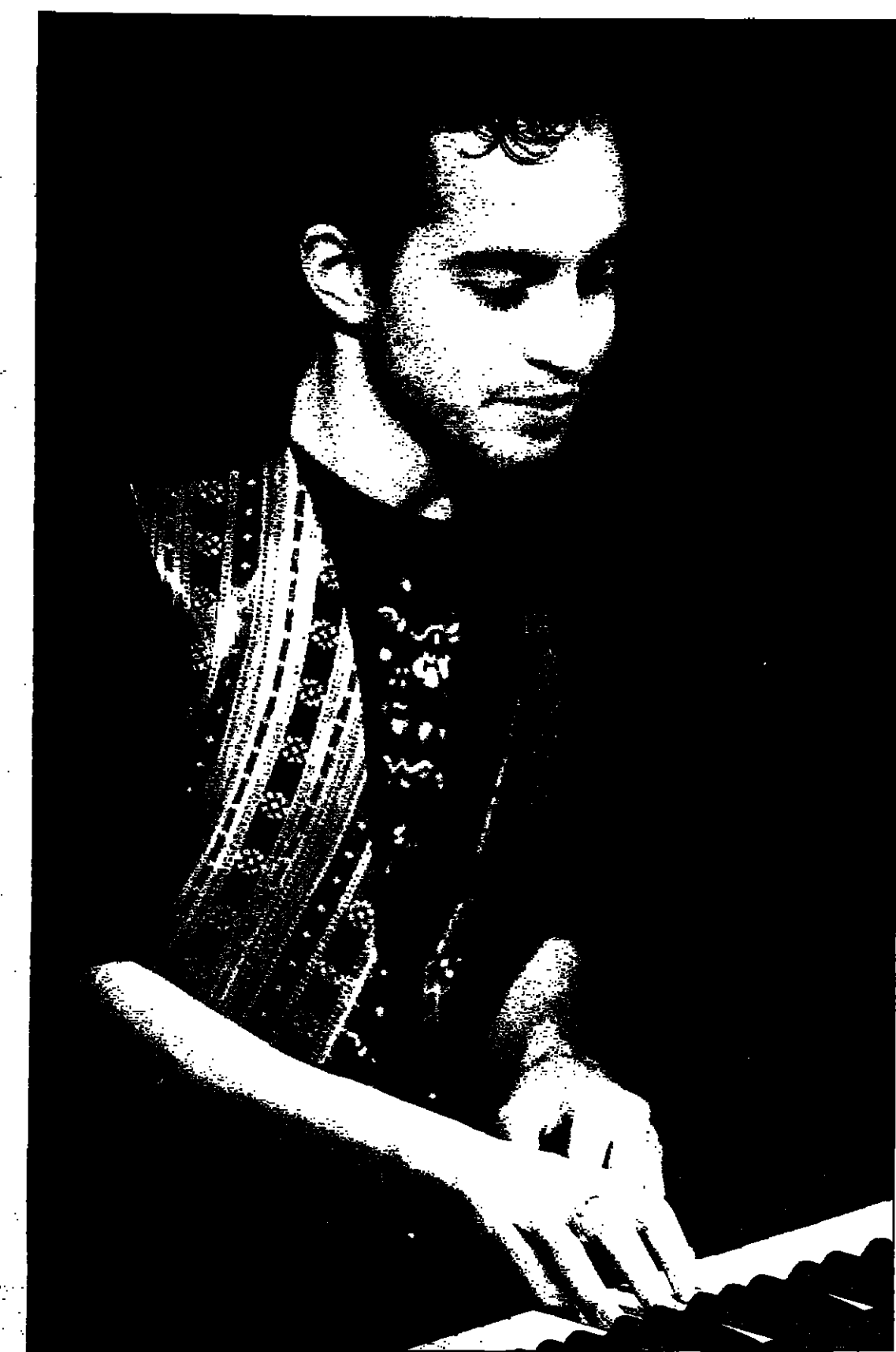
It's such a good story, it seems a shame to let mere facts get in the way. A brilliant and handsome young pianist at the top of his career suddenly packs it all in to go off to a Buddhist monastery in search of the meaning of life. After experiencing the stern discipline of monastic routine, he slowly finds himself once again and realises that his true gift is to make people happy through his music. He therefore bids a sad farewell to his fellow monks and leaves the monastery to play a fabulous comeback concert at the Royal Festival Hall, where amid the cheers and the ovations he meets his old flame backstage. They embrace passionately before he nips out front again for an encore, probably a bit of Rachmaninov. The pianist could be played by Brad Pitt, the monastery could be in Tibet, and Helena Bonham Carter could supply the love interest.

Well, it's nearly true. Jason Rebello is the pianist, and he is young, brilliant and handsome. He is also playing the South Bank tonight, although it's really the tiny Purcell Room and not the larger RHH (but this is British jazz, right?).

The performance is something of a comeback, too, even if it's not the first time he's stroked the ivories in public since he quit the cloister. And the monastery? Yep, there is one, but it's in Bradford-on-Avon, just outside Bath, rather than atop the Himalayas. Jason hasn't exactly left it either, although he's no longer a full-time monk. In fact he was only there for a couple of months, two years ago, but he still lives within sight of the place and goes there regularly to meditate. And finally – sorry, Brad – the Buddhism wasn't an overnight conversion; Rebello had been easing himself into it for years.

"I'm probably not cut out for a meditative life," Rebello says, a little embarrassed at the rather enthusiastic spin the promoter of tonight's concert has put on the Buddhist angle. "It's a tough thing to do, to become a monk. Being really honest, leaving the monastery came down to my reluctance to give up my own way of life. I was just too frightened to do that, and I didn't have the necessary detachment. You get up at 5.45am and do five hours of meditation a day, as well as lots of work, and coming from the lifestyle I was leading, it was the complete opposite. I intended to go for a few years but in the end it was only a few months because it became too difficult."

Rebello's story contains the seeds of yet another potent myth, in which his retreat (such as it was) can be seen as a response to the waning of the brief



Rebello without a cause? "When there's no me, there's no problem!"

Photograph: Rogan Coles/Federn

British jazz revival of the late Eighties and early Nineties, of which he was first a beneficiary and then a casualty. Following the success of Courtney Pine and Andy Sheppard for Island Records, Rebello was signed to BMG's Novus label in 1989; his debut album, *A Clearer View*, was produced by the star American saxophonist Wayne Shorter. Two further albums followed before his contract, like those of Pine and Shep-

pard, was dissolved when sales did not meet expectations. But this version of events is probably no nearer the truth than the first. Just before his decision to retire, Rebello had achieved his greatest fame so far, when he appeared as a TV presenter for BBC's popular culture series *Armchair*, a role he looked quite comfortable with.

Still only 28 years old, Rebello thinks that it may have been his pre-

cociously early success, as much as anything else, that led to his gradual disillusionment with music.

"I was trying to find a new meaning because I was getting increasingly dissatisfied with the way things were going," he says. "Sometimes, when your dreams are fulfilled early, you feel, 'Is that all there is?' You work hard and get success, which is what you hoped for, but your idea of what it will

be like is much more pleasant than it actually is, and as a consequence you feel let down. You think, 'Yes, if I'm successful, I'll be really happy and secure', but it doesn't really work like that."

The interest in Buddhism had been growing steadily ever since his professional career took off after he left the Guildhall School of Music in London in 1986. "I think what attracted me is that it's very logical – Buddhism can appeal to Westerners because they have this logical bent. You're not asked to believe things blindly; you're testing them out, almost like you're a scientist – you're trying to find out what is real."

For a jazz musician, the attraction of a philosophy that prizes the perfect moment above all else is very powerful, and many instrumentalists have compared the act of improvising to a kind of enlightened state. Sonny Rollins has talked about how he knows he is playing at his best if, in the midst of a solo, he loses himself in the music to the point where the saxophone seems to be playing him rather than the other way round. "In a sense, it's the self that impedes everything you do," Rebello says. "You're constantly trying to give up the idea that you're calling the shots. When you're playing, the idea of self is what makes it go wrong. When there's no me, there's no problem!"

Rebello's own style as a pianist doesn't, at least on the surface, suggest the intervention of any mystical force – unlike, say, the keyboard meditations of Keith Jarrett, a Gurdjieff man, or Bhaki Msekeli, who used to accompany Krishna devotees at a shrine in Balham. By contrast, Rebello is one of the most worldly-sounding of players, elegant and epigrammatic in the manner of Errol Garner or the great Art Tatum, and with an ear alert to the rhythms of funk and soul.

Rebello's pursuit of the perfect moment of improvisation is also being paralleled by a renewed interest in composition, and what could be the beginnings of a classical career. On Friday, a concert in the Park Lane Group's annual "Young Artists New Year Series" (also, as it happens, at the SBC's Purcell Room) features an arrangement Rebello has made for two pianos. "The piece is written so that it should sound like two jazz pianists improvising, almost like taping them and then writing it out," he says. Tonight's jazz concert features both a solo set, and a trio with bassist Wayne Batchelor and drummer Darren Beckert, but Rebello denies the press release's assertion that he will be playing *Jazz Meditation*, described as "a piece he wrote in his head when meditating in the monastery". "No," he laughs. "I'm just playing some tunes." It looks as if Rachmaninov, Brad Pitt and Tibet will have to wait a little longer.

8pm tonight, Purcell Room, SBC, London SE1 (0171-960 4242)



LAURE LEMES

Ice is nice – but the skate is great

Torvill and Dean
Wembley Arena

There were cushions for rent at Wembley Arena on Tuesday for the London premiere of Torvill and Dean's *Ice Adventures*, but everyone who felt the need had come with their own – plus a nice warm rug for their knees. No disrespect to the audience, but it would be a great place to shift a few Saga holiday brochures. The bulk of the capacity crowd seemed to be long-established fans and their eager applause certainly warmed things up.

Ice Adventures is a series of unconnected episodes set in a railway station, a tropical fish tank, a winter sports competition and a stylish New Year's Eve party. These changes of scene are contrived via a superb lighting design, by Durham Marengi, which projects various motifs – luggage labels, national flags, parquet blocks – on to the Arena floor. (Marengi's wildly cosmopolitan CV includes the Hong Kong hand-over ceremony.)

The main scenes are intercut with tedious bits of clowning from two Arctic hunters and a yeti-like object in fun fur. I don't suppose anyone ever lost money by underestimating the tastes of Ice Spectacular fans, but the constant force-feeding of comic interludes suggests that someone (presumably *Mr Bean* co-writer Robin Driscoll, who collaborated on *Ice Adventures*) has little faith in the audience's attention span.

This refusal to let the ice dance stand alone stems from a problem encountered by any sporting skater who retires to a life of ice shows: Olympic routines are exhausting. Torvill and Dean are seldom off the ice for long, but their need for breaks has spun this

show out to a bum-numbing two-and-a-half hours.

Of the interminable frozen fillings, the most memorable were Richard Swenning, and the Canadian couple Christine and Dion Belezny – who seem to specialise in the stunt work often frowned upon in amateur competition. Their party tricks include the "head-banger" – whereby the man swings his partner round by the ankles so that her nose shaves the ice – and a remarkable lift in which he raises her horizontal body over his head with one hand while spinning at top speed. Of all the guest stars, the Beleznyes seemed to have the most chemistry between them.

Torvill and Dean's way of inhabiting the music and their total concentration on each other rather than the spotlight have always marked them as artists rather than acrobats. Here they occupy a feature spot in each section, but pace themselves carefully for the party finale. "Take Five" is danced with the painstaking insouciance that characterises their work. Dean, *louché* and raffish in a white dinner jacket, partners with apparent effortlessness. The routine seamlessly incorporates the fancy stuff that audiences so adore with more densely textured moments that colour the commonplace lyrics of the accompanying ballads with the bittersweet world-weariness you see in a shrug of Sinatra's shoulder. Pair skating can't be improvised: the trick is to make it look that way.

To Sun, Wembley Arena (0181-900 1234); 13-17 Jan Manchester Nyrax Arena (0161-930 8000); 20-24 Jan Newcastle Arena (0191-401 8000); 27-31 Jan Sheffield Arena (0114 256 5656)

Louise Levene

Seasonal redemption via the satsuma bowl

TELEVISION



REVIEWED BY
THOMAS
SUTCLIFFE

The award for the least emotive moments of the last few days goes to the opening scenes of *Motherhood* (Sunday, BBC2) – a shrewdly acidic take on family life that began with an alcoholic mother belting her teenage daughter and emptying

the satsuma bowl over the floor so that she could use it to catch her vomit.

This genuinely painful scene – in which childhood hopes for what Christmas might deliver bumped hard against adult failings – made you brace yourself for something remedial, something sour and harsh, as an emetic for the sugar overdose which Christmas television conventionally delivers. What followed, though, was far more hopeful in tone, a tale of rescue and redemption.

Vanessa, the oldest child of four, decides to take matters in hand after her mother collapses in a sozzled heap. With Daddy staying at his girlfriend's flat and the nanny off to Denmark for the holidays, the way is clear for a spot of protective custody, so the children lock

their mother in the basement sauna and put her on a diet of compulsory cold turkey.

Despite that opening, *Motherhood* couldn't exactly be described as gritty in its realism – the sauna included the somewhat unusual design feature of a very large letterbox, to get round the problem of how the children feed their prisoner, and the plot was aided by Vanessa's handy ability to do a perfect imitation of her mother's voice, good enough to fool her ex-husband and other curious grown-ups.

But even though it poured sawdust into the gearbox to mask unsettling rattle, *Motherhood* conveyed some real truths – about childhood disillusionment and parental failure. The mitigated happy ending – mother restored to

loving sobriety but father dispossessed of his daughter's unquestioning adoration – left you feeling hopeful but not entirely convinced.

Matthew Jacobs' deft direction of his own adaptation of Gillian White's novel (the particularly enjoyed long bout of delirium tremens) was also assisted by an excellent performance from Kate Maherley as Vanessa, determined and resentful and vulnerable by turns.

One of the other one-off dramas shown over the Christmas week also ended with a rising inflection that seemed to owe more to seasonal goodwill than to cold-eyed realism. Guy Jenkins's *Mr White Goes to Westminster* (Tuesday, Channel 4) concluded with his hero vowing to battle on against corruption, cynicism and circulation-

boosting lies. The plot and characters for Jenkins' satire had been supplied by life, but only as far as the first ad break – after that he had to work out what to do with his Martin Bell figure – an ex-war correspondent who stands as an independent against a sleazebaited Tory candidate.

His solution was a good one, with the MP winning the ballot for Private Members' Bills and attempting to push through legislation in which would compel newspapers to offer redress if they published lies about ordinary members of the public. What followed was partly a tutorial on how a sharp-edged Bill can be polished to innocuous smoothness by its passage through the party machine, partly an exploration of how private honour and

public probity might easily twist themselves into an unloosable knot. (White's bill is secretly supported by his former lover, an ambitious Labour backbencher – he can't reveal the source of his funding to the rapacious hacks without dishing her career.)

Since he had constructed this tangle with some care, it was a bit surprising that Jenkins should cut it apart so casually, with all the principal characters suddenly displaying a spotless and self-sacrificing nobility of character. Perhaps he wanted a bit of Capra optimism to finish with – but you couldn't help feeling that he was going against form as he did so – that the unruly contempt that supplied some of the best jokes here had been temporarily silenced just because it was Christmas.

RADIO



REVIEWED BY
ROBERT
HANKS

It has been a long year – 1997, that is, 1998 has so far been a comparatively short one, though that situation seems set to change over the coming months – and the world of radio has had its full quota of thrills and amazements – from James Boyle's announcement that Ra-

dio 4 programmes would all be abolished and replaced by something similar, only better (an idea adapted by the Labour Party, with startling success, for its election manifesto), to Chris Evans's sudden purchase of Virgin Radio and subsequent appointment of his horse as director of programmes.

What with all the walk-outs, buy-outs, rows, deals, and Mark Radcliffe bobbing up and down the Radio 1 schedules, it's been hard to pay attention to the programmes themselves.

And the effort hasn't always been repaid. On Radio 4, in particular, there has been a dearth of interesting new features, and a dispiriting glut of rebashed old features, generally featuring Barbie dolls. Darwinian insights into human psychology, or the undertaker poet Thomas Lynch. Mean-

while, the regular magazine programmes – *Woman's Hour*, *The Afternoon Shift*, *Kaleidoscope* – have seemed irradiated with tedium: you want to decontaminate yourself after listening.

Hence the surprisingly unindignant response to Mr Boyle's slash-and-burn scheduling philosophy.

Elsewhere at the BBC, though, things have been looking more cheerful. During the brief interlude when Mark and Lard were occupying the breakfast slot – admittedly not the best showcase for their talents – Radio 1 had the most creative and satisfying line-up it's ever seen. Then again, Zoë Ball.

Radio 2 is Radio 2, and there's nothing you or I can do to stop it, but the evening schedules have become increasingly bold and challenging.

with some really quite clever and witty programmes popping up in odd corners. Then again, Steve Wright's *Sunday Lovesongs*.

Radio 3's musical presentation, still chasing after that ignis fatuus "accessibility", has got lost in the decaying swamp of inane cheerfulness. But speech output has been outstanding: the Sunday afternoon feature and the nightly post-concert strand have scored repeatedly, while *Night Waves*, a programme that once suffered terrible reception problems due to being transmitted from somewhere up its own backside, has pulled itself out of that hole with aplomb.

The facile logic behind Radio 5's existence was shown up by Princess Diana's death: what's the point of having 24-hour rolling news when you're

going to blank out every other channel? Still, it has given a wise-to-a-bloke, intelligent sort of person who hasn't had one before. Few of the independent stations offer such a sharply defined alternative to the other BBC networks – the notable and oddly lovable exception being Talk Radio UK, whose persistent advocacy of many brands of lunacy has at times made *The X Files* look like a particularly sober edition of *Panorama*.

In the end, though, the radio highlights of 1997 were all BBC programmes, and mostly broadcast on Radio 4. The exception was *Blue Jam*, Chris Morris's seething mix of music and heartless comedy on Radio 1. It had something of the same remorselessness, the same refusal to let the listener off the hook, that marked out my

favourite drama, Bill Bryden's noisy version of Alistair MacLean's existential navy lark *HMS Ulisses*.

Documentary needs to be kinder than this. The best factual series was Noah Richler's *In Paradise*, a rich, eccentric exploration of how garden design and eschatology overlap in a variety of cultures, which showed an exceptional eagerness to understand other points of view.

And the best single documentary was Matt Thompson's *Touching the Elephant*, in which four blind people were invited to visit the zoo and discover what an elephant felt like: an acute investigation of how we perceive things. It was, inexplicably, deeply moving. If 1998 comes up with another programme as good, it won't have been a wasted year.

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Not so many straws as haystacks the wind

The holiday season is traditionally the time of wheedlings. Normally they come in the form of an Agatha Christie movie on the telly, but this year the country has indulged itself in a real life political mystery. Our Legal Affairs Correspondent looks at the chain of media clues that pointed to the identity of that Cabinet minister.

BY MICHAEL STREET

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Not so much straws as haystacks in the wind

The holiday season is traditionally the time of whodunnits. Normally they come in the form of an Agatha Christie movie on the telly, but this year the country has indulged itself in a real-life political mystery. Our Legal Affairs Correspondent looks at the chain of media clues that pointed to the identity of that Cabinet minister.

The British love a good mystery. Yesterday the denouement of the thriller "Who was the Cabinet minister whose son (allegedly) sold drugs to a reporter?" finally arrived, though not before the country's

BY
MICHAEL
STREETER

ramshackle media laws once more began to look farcical. A week after the story first broke, it seemed that the entire planet except for the people who voted in the Labour government last May knew the solution to the riddle.

Yet there have been hints enough over those seven days for newspaper readers to solve the puzzle. Some clues have been cunningly disguised, designed only for the cognoscenti to pick up on, for those with already half a clue as to the man's identity. In others, the hints have been so blatant one has half expected to find a giant arrow over a photograph of Jack Straw with the caption "It's him, folks!"

One of the broadest hints came in the *Mirror* itself, the newspaper which broke the story on Christmas Eve, and which was condemned by some parts of the chattering classes simply for doing its job of investigative journalism. Aggrieved that Dawn Alford, one of its two reporters who were present in the pub with Master Straw, had been arrested in connection with possession, it led its front page on Tuesday with the headline "Is it fair, Mr Straw?"

The reason for such a tell-tale - but understandable - heading was that the paper was writing to the Home Secretary "as head of law and order", asking him to investigate the matter. Just in case no one got the message, two photographs of the minister were also included.

Never noted for its subtlety, the *Sun* (smarting over its rival's scoop) ran a column on Tuesday by William Langley in which he revealed that the minister concerned had played a central role in the Government's policies against drugs and on parental responsibility. This was as clear a reference to the Home Secretary's policies as you could get. But just to be sure, Mr Langley ended his article by suggesting that instead of setting an example, by appearing to hide behind the anonymity of the law, the minister concerned was open to charges of an "I'm all right, Jack" attitude.

One of the clearest signs possible came from a front page story in the *Independent On Sunday* last weekend, which in the middle of discussing the issue suddenly declared that the Home Secretary had turned down a "formal approach" for an interview by the newspaper. With no other context, the reference could have no other meaning than revealing the minister's identity.

Meanwhile, other newspapers continued to pepper reports of the affair with mentions and photographs of Jack Straw (*qua* Home Secretary) and law-and-order policy, and even some television broadcasts

appeared to be playing the spot-the-clue game. In one news broadcast on New Year's Day, Sky TV used footage of the Cabinet which lingered tellingly on Mr Straw.

But perhaps the cheekiest clue came from yesterday's *London Evening Standard*, in whose Diary there was a "good news" story of how Mr Straw's teenage son William has succeeded in winning a place to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford University. An "insider" was quoted as saying he will have no problems with his A-levels "providing nothing else distracts him".

It ended: "If only all politicians' children could set such a shining academic example."

All this is good fun on one level, of course, except that by the time the *Standard* was reduced to that play, all the world knew, or could know, of the minister's identity except for the majority of people in England and Wales.

For some observers, there is something rather dismal about the British media being reduced to such sad subterfuges to tell their readers of something the rest of the world has known about for days.

Scottish newspapers, which yesterday named Mr Straw, just completed the circle of publications which took up camp around the legal fortress of England. Irish newspapers and broadcasters had got in on the act, as had *France-Soir*, a French newspaper available in this country, and assorted press and media from all around the globe. Indeed, by yesterday afternoon, Associated Press news service was running the name in this country.

There was however, a class of Britons who were in on the secret - the media and political establishments who informed themselves within hours of the *Mirror's* initial publication. This privileged information was quickly spread among families and friends, with the words "It's Jack Straw" replacing the usual "Happy Christmas" greetings when journalists visited their relatives on 25 December.

Even some Metropolitan Police officers - the force which arrested William Straw - were phoning their media contacts to discover the inside track, while one journalist revealed the mystery man's name to fellow diners at a packed London restaurant as midnight chimed on New Year's Eve.

There was one more group of people in the know within days of the story breaking: Britain's growing band of Internet users. If ever there was a good example of how the Net can be used to undermine media controls, this was it - but usually those people who extol this virtue are referring to Third World dictatorships, not to a country which is poised to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into its domestic law.

The Net discussion sites were buzzing as early as Christmas Eve, speculating furiously over the mystery minister. By Christmas Day enterprising netters had published full lists of male members of the Cabinet who had children, and by a process of elimination Jack Straw, who lived in the right area and has a teenage son, was singled out. The clincher for some was the obscure - and unconfirmed - piece of information that Alastair Campbell, the Prime Minister's press secretary, had been spotted at a bus stop outside Mr Straw's south London house the night before the story broke on Christmas Eve.

But while the nettles' sleuthing is to be applauded, they still represent a minority - 6 million users - of the population, leaving the great majority of ordinary voters who do not have media and political contacts in the dark.

And the Cabinet minister's name did and does matter. Mr Straw is, after all, the Home Secretary who has strongly opposed the legalisation of cannabis while highlighting the central importance of parental

INDEPENDENT Daily Mail

ON SUNDAY

...nouncing those who sell recreational drugs and have insisted that the parents must share the blame. The minister concerned could be open to the accusation of saying one thing and doing another."

Home Secretary Jack Straw has turned down a formal approach for an interview from the *Independent* on Sunday.

Testing drug offenders, page 2

The minister's son, page 3

at Maze

Three IRA men arrested in four people gunned down outside Derry prison hotel. IRA now rejects call to resign

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14/LEADER & LETTERS

A Straw in the wind shows you can't keep a good story down



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Some readers will detect a heavy dose of media self-interest in the saga of whether or not Jack Straw would be named as the man whose son supplied cannabis to a *Mirror* reporter before Christmas. And some readers are, of course, right. It was a cracking story, and in the news business that countermands most other considerations.

Today we, like other papers, are able to tell the full story. It is no longer the case, as it had been throughout the Christmas holiday season, that the political and journalistic establishment knew the identity of the minister but the rest of Britain didn't. A week ago, we said that the story told us nothing essential or new about the drugs debate. A week on, we haven't changed our minds. But in the meantime, we have all been caught up in days of collective twisted-knickerism about power, secrecy, hypocrisy, the press, the Attorney-General, politicians generally, and "the right to know". It is well worth a few minutes' disentangling.

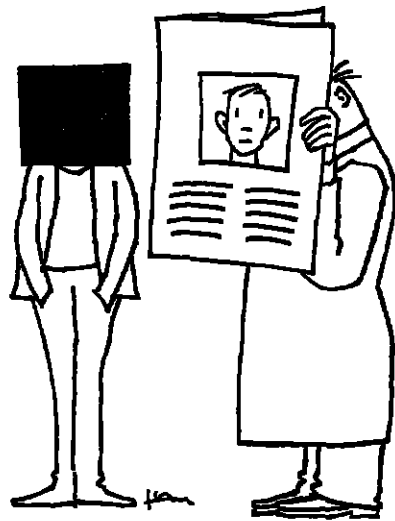
First, is the law an ass generally to prevent newspapers publishing the identities of youngsters in court cases? No. Despite the numbers of people in their mid-teens who commit unpleasant and sometimes violent crimes that would disgrace any adult, the law is wise. Helping people to

grow up, and grow away from crime, means avoiding branding them early in their lives.

Second, though, is the law excessively inflexible in this regard? Probably, it is. Like it or not, where the 17-year-old involved is the son of the Home Secretary, at a time when the Home Secretary is trying to remoralise the country's attitude to youth and drugs, that person is in a different category from any other teenager. Given that his offence was a common one, and doesn't affect the wider issues, that is his bad luck. But the story was just too interesting, too piquant, to stay for long at the level of north London dinner-party gossip. The politicians were ill-advised to try to keep the lid on it. Given that Mr Straw wanted to speak out, the Attorney-General, in particular, has made a fool of himself in effectively gagging his colleague.

Yesterday, he was forced to change direction. Why? Because in the modern world, if a secret is sufficiently interesting, it simply cannot be kept from one group of people, in this case those living in England and Wales.

Scotland has her own legal system. Yesterday, facing no legal threat themselves, three Scottish papers published Mr Straw's name. The Republics of Ireland and France have papers that are quite widely read in England. They did the same.



Millions of people cross to and from Britain all the time, carrying information as well as wine and suntan oil. And for anyone with a thousand pounds' worth or so of computer kit in the back bedroom, all the facts were anyway available on the Internet.

We live in a highly porous world.

where news and gossip sloshes around, blithely ignoring traditional jurisdictions: whether it be satellite broadcasting, the Net or cheap flights to Paris, technology trumps censorship, time after time after time. New Labour, as people still freshly in power and therefore presumably still reasonably in touch with realities, ought to have realised that from the start.

So it follows, then, that all government should stop trying to censor anything, and that we should know everything about everyone? Some editors who should know better have been quick to say that the Straw saga demonstrates the impossibility of a privacy law ever working. That, too, shows a lack of proportion. This was a highly unusual case, with a strong political flavouring.

A privacy law which protected ordinary citizens from prying into their private sexual lives, for instance, would not be affected by the availability of foreign newspapers in London, or by the Internet. Similarly, the classification and occasional censorship of films can be defended even when "everybody knows" you can get the stuff in Belgium or Soho. Everybody knows, but everybody doesn't go. Most people can't be bothered. Meanwhile, protecting young minds from images of extreme and sadistic violence

remains a valid thing for governments to try to do.

What, finally, about the position of Mr Straw himself? It is undeniably embarrassing. He will be laughed at by some, the next time he speaks about drugs to young people generally. The professional sneerers will find some easy copy in the weeks ahead. It would have been much easier for him had his name been published immediately, and the week of innuendo, nudge-nudging and press pontification been avoided. But we don't believe there is a single fair-minded person who thinks worse of him for what happened. It is the kind of thing that can happen, and in many cases has happened, to families up and down the country. He dealt with it briskly and is at last talking about it openly. How can he be less qualified to do his job now he is revealed as a normal member of an ordinary family, than he was before?

The only lesson for the whole Government to remember is that you can't keep a good story down. For a few days, as we digested smears and leaks from the police, injunctions from the Attorney-General and the arrest of the reporter concerned, and noted a rising bubble of mockery from all sides, they looked like a flat-footed, out of touch Tories at their worst. We only hope they noticed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Paying for the Pill

Sir: It would be an astonishing irony indeed if free contraception, which has survived 18 years of Conservative government, were now to fall victim to a New Labour government with more than one hundred women MPs ("Prescription charge plan for Pill", 31 December).

Not only an irony but also innumerate nonsense if the intention, as stated, is to save public money. Someone should whisper in Tony Blair's ear that the alternative to spending some £40 a year on contraception will be, in many cases, to spend around £350 once or twice a year on NHS abortion, according to figures given in the House of Commons by Tessa Jowell on 12 November; or £1,398 on childbirth in the NHS, as reported by Paul Boateng in the House on 30 October. These figures take account only of average immediate NHS costs, and not of social support in the future in helping parents to cope with unwanted children. These costs are probably incalculable.

MADELINE SIMMS
London NW11

Rebel MEPs

Sir: I'm afraid my erstwhile colleagues Hugh Kerr and Ken Coates are being a little economical with the truth ("Rebel MEPs accuse Labour machine of dirty tricks", 2 January). There is no necessity for an annual re-affirmation of political group membership. Myself and my colleagues have not had to inform the President of the European Parliament that we intend to continue as members of the Socialist Group in 1998. It is taken as automatic.

However, the administrative rules of the parliament provide financial if not political motives for such a declaration of change of political affiliation. Political group finances will be calculated on the basis of group membership as of 5 January 1998. It seems that the two rebels want to have their cake and eat it. They would like to be expelled from the Labour Party, but not at the cost of losing to the Socialist Group the dowry they can offer the Greens for membership if they sign up before 5 January.

The rules of the parliament are crystal clear; you cannot belong to two groups simultaneously. It will not be the first time, or the last, that financial considerations will have influenced political principle. If the two MEPs have signed up to join the Greens, they have inevitably left the Labour Party. In consequence, all that needs to be done is note their departure.

GLYN FORD MEP
(Greater Manchester East, Lab)

Brussels
The writer is Socialist Group Spokesman on the European Parliament's Rules Committee

Hunt sabotage

Sir: Julie Roxburgh claims (letter, 29 December) that hunt saboteurs would never harm an animal. This is not

true. One only has to watch the Boxing Day footage of the Essex and Farmers' Union hunt to see a saboteur deliberately terrifying horses by threatening to hit them with a placard. I myself have seen a horse seized by the bridle in such a painful way that it reared up and fell on its rider. This is to say nothing of the many foxes I have seen killed as a direct result of hunt saboteurs running in to block their only avenue of escape and turning them back into the path of the hounds.

As for the Tredegar hounds (report, 27 December), I agree with Mrs Roxburgh so far as to believe that whoever fed them the poisoned meal did not intend to kill them. I would guess the meal contained enough drug to dope the entire pack with the intention of rendering it incapable of hunting on Boxing Day but, in the way of all dogs, the first hounds to find the food bolted the lot and received a lethal overdose.

In other words it was not malice, but stupidity and ignorance that killed them. Anyone who has watched hunt saboteurs in action will not be surprised.

SARAH GODLEY
Dorking, Surrey

Anti-anti-anti-smoking

Sir: Virginia Ironside has become as big an anti-anti-smoking bore as any of the anti-smoking bores whom she rightly castigates (Dilemmas, 1 January). Bore, by definition, tedious, but Ms Ironside is dangerous also, because she succeeds in giving the impression that smoking really does not matter—or is even to be encouraged.

But it does matter. Your article "Fall in cancer deaths overshadowed by rise in number of cases" (31 December) says "The sharp fall in lung cancer deaths among men reflects the fall in smoking that began over 20 years ago" and evidence just keeps on coming: this very week the *British Medical Journal* reports an authoritative new study, "Passive Smoking: The Health Impact", which indicates that passive smoking, among other unpleasant things, "increases the risk of lung cancer, and as a result, leads to the deaths of an estimated 2,000 non-smokers each year" within the EU.

On New Year's Day, of all days, it seems a bit unfair for Virginia Ironside to undermine anyone's resolve to give up smoking. God knows it's hard enough without that; and it is distressing to learn that to the costs of smoking must now be added those of candles, matches and cans of deodorant spray to render our living rooms wholesome again. Especially as they don't work.

DAVID GIRLING
Newcastle upon Tyne

Sir: Virginia Ironside does not know her history. It was not Hitler who first introduced anti-smoking into modern (i.e. post-Reformation) society but James I, whose *A Counter Blast*



Animal rescue organisations are full of healthy cats in need of a home

Photograph: John Lawrence

Cats at Christmas

Sir: The kitten bought by Rupert Cornwell as a Christmas present for his young son ("On the unseasonal death of a pet", 24 December) had been purchased from a pet shop and Mr Cornwell was told by the shopkeeper that it was seven weeks old. Within days the kitten had died, much to his family's distress.

to Tobacco was published as early as 1604. So a thinking person's aversion to this foul habit is not particularly new.

GEORGE GÖMÖRI
Darwin College, Cambridge

Nerd or profiteer?

Sir: What a carry-on up the cyber path ("How the nerds are leading us up the cyber path", 27 December). Do I detect a whiff of sociological cybermanure?

Given that Bill Gates's lifestyle is unlike yours and mine, we can ask if that goes with being a very rich man, or with being the boss of a vast corporation or with playing with computers.

Has there actually been an experiment which proved that brilliant minds are ineffective in ordinary life? How did they define the sample of brilliant people? Did all the selected people meekly participate and fail at the ordinary tasks? How do you define an ordinary task in the real world, and success or failure in it?

The more interesting question seems to me to be: "Why are we hostile to bright people?" We burnt witches, not realising that we were depriving the pop-

No reputable rescue organisations re-home any of the animals in their care over the Christmas period but sadly some pet shops take advantage of the seasonal rise in demand. Kittens from pet shops have often been taken from their mothers when they are far too young and are unable to feed properly. It would not surprise me if this particular kitten was in fact younger than seven weeks.

ulation of genes for bright and individual minds.

I would dispute your reasons for computers being difficult to use. Gratuitous is nothing to do with it. The reasons are profit, profit and profit. Once upon a time I was employed in selling a computer program which came with a manual. To reduce costs the manual was never produced. The boss's response to my protest was that the customers' money would be in the bank before they found out, and to remember that negative attitudes don't lead to promotion.

FRANCES BELL
Penrith, Cumbria

Here's the number

Sir: Charles Arthur is incorrect in claiming that all railway stations are no longer listed in the telephone directory ("Mystery tale of the missing railway stations", 31 December).

A glance at the Yellow Pages for Shropshire, Hereford and Mid-Wales will reveal the main-line railway station contact telephone numbers for Gobowen (01691 679659), Ledbury, Ludlow and Newtown Powys. These stations, together with those at Pembrey and Burry Port, Clitheroe and Saxmundham,

have booking offices provided by travel agents who specialise in national and international rail travel and whose staff spare no effort to apply the highest standards of customer care, including an efficient local train enquiry service.

DAVID J LLOYD
Manager
Severn-Dee Travel
Gobowen Railway Station
Oswestry, Shropshire

A modest proposal

Sir: It is clear that the Government does not consider that the rearing of children can be called "work". The Government might therefore prefer that all women in the UK should stop rearing children so that they could, instead, engage in "real work". In contrast to the action suggested in another context by Lysistrata, this would hardly constitute strike action, and might even be applauded by the many men who have no desire to contribute to the bringing up of their own offspring.

Eventually, an ageing population without young people to support it could be taken over by such members of the EU as are willing to pay and respect women for the community service of producing the next generation.

This would be a long-term solution to the problem of idle lone parents, but perhaps Mr Blair would like to accelerate the process by sending all ex-

at the very earliest. Animal rescue organisations are full to the brim with healthy cats and kittens desperately needing good homes. Perhaps now would be the right time for Mr Cornwell's family to approach one of them about homing one or even two kittens.

M J McCRAWLEY
Chief Executive
The Cats Protection League
Horsham, West Sussex

isting young children abroad, as an acceptable beef substitute. The mothers would not then require expensive childcare provision and could concentrate all their energies on making money instead of making the future population of these islands.

DOREEN TAMPION
Teignmouth, Devon

Supermarket strike

Sir: Your series of reports on supermarkets (from 29 December) is typically consumerist in focus. Try another angle. The large supermarkets employ large workforces, most of which are organised in trade unions. Their power, should they decide to use it, is considerable. They could, in fact, halt much of consumerist society at a stroke. Supermarket workers, the new miners?

KEITH FLETT
London N17

Out of joint

Sir: I can understand why an article about cannabis ("They're so out of it they can't face reality", 2 January) is often accompanied by a picture of a joint and a small pile of weed—presumably so that Cabinet Ministers know what they're talking about. But why are the pictured spliffs always so badly rolled? Surely even a Cabinet Minister's son could do better than this.

MARK REARDON
Leeds

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

A lot of readers have written over the Christmas break to express delight at the return of the one-section newspaper, which we have been obliged to produce due to the lack of holiday advertising. This tally with a constant drip of letters during the rest of the year from people protesting about the usual two-section weekly paper, and the multi-section Saturday paper.

Well, here comes a confession: I too like single-section papers. If we had different printing presses (four-tower, in the jargon, not three-tower) and could expand the main broadsheet paper beyond 32 pages, then I would love to return to the purity of the single-section weekday paper. But we are limited in size and simply cannot, throughout the year, cram in everything that needs to be in a 32-page broadsheet... as well as printing the advertising we need to stay in business. (Those readers who rather sweetly suggest dropping the adverts should be prepared to pay £1 or more for their daily paper as a result.) Saturday papers are rather different. They are becoming more like Sunday ones and our research suggests that, while a minority want smaller papers, most people expect a multi-section weekend read.

Staring into the mirror—pudding-faced, hungover, pouchy-eyed and smeared with the fatty residues of self-indulgence—I can as usual at this time of year think of no Resolution which I have the faintest intention of keeping. So here are a few friendly suggestions for others. Tony Blair: to maintain a serious and unsmiling image at all times. The New Labour Government generally: to pick a fight with someone rich and powerful. Rupert Murdoch: to publicly apologise for being such a global bastard and retire to a monastery to contemplate his many sins. Damien Hirst: to hold an exhibition of graceful little

landscapes in watercolours. Bill Gates: to try a pencil. Gordon Brown: to save Britain's free-admission galleries and museums. Oasis: to retire. The Teletubbies: to behave disgracefully at music-awards ceremonies, do a sponsorship deal with a cigarette manufacturer, storm out of a *Newsnight* interview, and then... retire (to spend their ill-gotten gains on pink custard and ecstasy in a Hacienda-style mansion in Hertfordshire). I don't suppose any of the above will follow this well-meant advice. But it would cheer up 1998 if they did.

Surrounded by a grey ocean of newspaper over Christmas and New Year, it becomes increasingly clear that the news business is badly disorganised. Holidays are the time most people can spend maximum time reading papers; but there is generally a severe shortage of strong news stories just when people have time to enjoy them. What we need to do, clearly, is to arrange a better match between supply and the demands of news addicts. This could be done by storing particularly spicy news stories and releasing them much later, during December, July, August and at Easter. After all, if you are interested in a daring helicopter rescue, it isn't going to matter much whether you first find out about it now or in a few months' time, so long as you aren't last to find out. To make this work, interesting stories would be stored in sealed containers—to mature, like wine—and a committee of editors would meet before every holiday break to decide which should be released to cheer up readers. It seemed, however briefly, a brilliant idea. On the other hand, leading through a wide selection of the festive press, it becomes quite apparent that's more or less what happens anyway.

Andrew Marr

QUOTE UNQUOTE

There are genuine agoraphobics, who become panic-stricken out of doors. And those whose fears vanish as the betting shops open—Lord Tebbit, on benefit scroungers

I'll eat something out of the fridge with its sell-by date glaring back at me, salmonella winking at me in neon lights. But life's too short. I can't be worrying about salmonella when I'm worrying about hitting my high-Cs—Lesley Garrett, soprano

Virtually every foreign secretary I have ever served with in the past 30 years has fallen fast asleep in my presence—Lord Renwick, former British ambassador to Washington

People resent fat-cat businessmen with their noses in the trough, but they don't seem to resent fat-cat footballers earning more in a week than the supporter earns in a year—David Mellor, head of the Government's Football Task Force

Conductors should be back on the buses, packets of salt back in the crisps, clockwork back in clocks, and levers back on pens—Penelope Fitzgerald, author, expressing hopes for '98

Raw materials, cheap slaves and beautiful prostitutes—Alexander Prokhanov, *"Izvestia"* editor, on what should be portrayed in a new symbol for his country

With its flaming
in a bubble. It i

JOHN
LICHFIELD
SURRENDERING
TO THE TIMES

Not everything

LEND
DOPE



صلى الله عليه وسلم

With its flamingos and parrots, it is paradise in a bubble. It is too seductive to leave



JOHN LICHFIELD SURRENDERING TO THE TIMES

Imagine a muddy forest surrounded by some of the dullest countryside in France. Scattered, implausibly, among the trees are 500 prefab bungalows, a hotel, a shopping mall, a sports centre and a swimming pool, called "The Tropical Aquatic Paradise". The last three are housed in the "bule" or "bubble", a kind of moon-base, rising Spielbergishly above the pine trees and bungalows. The whole is surrounded by one token, but psychologically significant, strand of barbed wire.

CenterParcs are a Dutch idea, now successfully exported to Britain and to France. The concept is simple: an inland holiday camp for the relatively affluent and sporty, aimed at families with young or teenage kids, but also popular, by my observation, with groups of parent-fleeing youngsters. Cars are allowed into to off-load only. After that they are banished to a car park at the edge of the wire "for the sake of our children". It is difficult to argue with such a sensible rule. But the distance to the car park also creates a powerful incentive not to stray outside in the surrounding towns. Instead, you spend your money in the restaurants and shops within the wire. Prices in them are irritatingly above the going rate in the free world but not so irritatingly that you are tempted, more than once, to make a Colditz-style mission to eat lunch.

We spent the New Year at the CenterParcs site on the edge of Normandy. The first thing I should say is that the younger members of the family had a wonderful time. The second thing I should say is that I have never heard anyone speak a slighting word about a CenterParc holiday.

Thus it is doubly my problem that I found the experience spiritually crushing: a paradigm of what is most addictive, compelling and depressing about the late 20th century, the age of the mall and the video-cassette, the age of pre-packaged freedom, of frenetic, but unadventurous easy fun. The CenterParcs experience reminded me of East Germany, or, rather, East Germany, as it might have been, if it had been run by the Dutch and staffed by the French: a kind of cosy, sporty, bossy, lobotomised world, in which everyone was busy and contented, save a few, puzzled old dissidents like me.

I use the plural in the hope that there were a few other dissidents around but I confess I never made contact with them. There was one French man, of whom, originally, I had high hopes. He gave me a wry, knowing smile on the first day, as if to say "what on earth are we doing here. We are men of the world, used to freedom, adventure, the high road and more than seven channels on the TV."

I complained to him, inarticulate, by no doubt, about all the bossy rules,



Bossy, sporty, lobotomised: a CenterParc is mostly a place of happiness. There are dissidents, though

the enforced sense of happy times and the constant, gentle extraction of money. He just grinned. The next day, I met him in the Tropical Aquatic Paradise as I was juggling with wet towels, arm-bands, a swimming ring, a float-board, three overcoats and three sets of clothes and searching for a five franc piece for the locker, which was somewhat larger than a cigar box. He saw a complaining look on my face and butted in before I could talk. "C'est bien, n'est ce pas?" When I started to object, he specified: "Eh bien, c'est super pour les gamins." (Well, it's wonderful for the children). "What could one say? Of course it was super for the gamins. The accused gamins were having a great time."

It might be thought that the individualistic French would resist the regimentation of CenterParcs. Not a bit of it. The two French centres are booked up for the peak periods weeks in advance. It is true that, when it

comes to holidays, the French are among the least packaged nations on earth. But that is largely because they (80 per cent) take their holidays in France. Many of them, 60 per cent according to one study, spend their holidays in their own second homes, or with relatives in the countryside or sponging on friends.

If they are forced to pay for their holidays, the French are rather drawn to a bit of regimentation. Club Med, an up-market CenterParcs, often with worse facilities, was after all a French idea. The French are - against the round-shouldered stereotype - a very sporty nation. French children were recently declared by a Europe-wide investigation to be the fittest in the EU. All in all, the French take to the hyperactive, CenterParcs idea depressingly well. They are, presumably, individualistic within their bungalows while conforming in public: nothing could be more French than that.

The most archetypal of all CenterParc residents, to my eyes, were the two parrots and six flamingos, which always occupied the same branch and same pool of water in the giant, cigarette-smoke filled "bubble" at the heart of the site. Their job was to help convert the shopping mall and swimming pool into the Tropical Aquatic Paradise, as advertised. They could have flown around the shops if they had wanted to: with a little guile, they could even have escaped. But the birds saw no reason to cause any trouble, except occasionally to fight amongst themselves. It was warm. They had friends. Their food was brought to them. Their presence entertained the gamins. On our 50th trip to what I insisted on calling the swimming pool, Charlie, aged seven, asked: "But, Daddy, what is a Tropical Automatic Paradise?"

"Automatic paradise", the phrase summed up the place perfectly.

Football mania has a lot to answer for



TREVOR PHILLIPS THE TROUBLE WITH BOYS

Some New York wag once calculated that after you'd discounted the men who were too old, too young, gay, married, unemployed, in prison, about to go into prison, junkies, or downright social misfits, the choice available to a young woman was pretty thin: just one eligible bachelor for every nine women. When the statistic was trotted out, all attached males would chorus "So where's my other eight, then?"

As ever, there's a grain of truth in the satire; and whilst the British can never lay claim to the extremes generated by American society, the statistics released by Scotland Yard this week will cause a shudder among the parents of teenage girls throughout the land. The young women themselves may simply shrug their shoulders; they've suspected for most of their lives that their male peers are worse than useless.

The picture painted by the Scotland Yard study is of loutish, delinquent males, many barely able to write their names. Children, mostly boys under 16, commit two out of every five street robberies, one in three car thefts and a similar proportion of house burglaries. Having recently been the victim of auto crime, I can even envisage the sort of little creep we are talking about - but let's not dwell on my prejudices. Instead, we should note that many of these crimes are committed during school hours; not surprisingly, the educational achievement of those who are caught and can therefore be studied, is somewhat lower than that of the average Teletubby. Interviews of 500 young offenders by the Basic Skills Agency showed that one in five couldn't write their names and addresses properly, half had problems with the time and date, and three out of 10 couldn't fill in a job application form - and none of these was under the influence of illegal substances at the time.

These are people for whom applying to a welfare-to-work scheme, the Big Idea for their salvation, represents an intellectual challenge the size of Mount Everest. The minister responsible for standards in schools has declared himself "staggered" - a state all too familiar to teenage boys following an active Friday night. We will hear his proposals for

remedying the situation on Monday; no doubt there will be a task force or two, some new schemes to spread the successful practice by some outstanding headteachers (in line for honours next time round, probably), and the obligatory exhortation to teachers to demand more from their male students. But sooner or later someone will have to explain what is going on.

Assuming that there isn't anything being put into the water to depress male IQ, to what can we attribute these findings? One unusual, but, I think, rather credible cause has recently been brought to my attention: football. A distinguished educationist (who modestly does not wish to be named) has recently drawn my attention to work suggesting that boys are becoming so utterly obsessed by the beautiful game that there is little space left in their little brains for anything else.

On the face of it, this seems slightly absurd; Sir Tom Finney was as ardently hero-worshipped as Alan Shearer. George Eastham as eagerly followed as is Ian Wright. Small boys imitated George Best's footwork as assiduously as Ryan Giggs's. But a generation ago, football was just one of a number of recreations, alongside cricket, athletics, stamp-collecting, war games and the Boy Scouts; today it is a total way of life. Television, the stock market and oodles of money have turned a game into a self-contained universe. Boys talk about it, watch it, and gain their status from performing on the field, talking about it off the field, knowing its history and statistics inside out. Games teachers complain that potential geniuses in other sports settle for mediocrity in soccer; classroom teachers sigh that half their classes are only whiling away the hours inside before rushing out to the playground to practise their latest free-kick set pieces.

I would yield to no one in my enthusiasm for football; anyone who has given nearly four decades to the cause of Chelsea Football Club needs no further proof of devotion to the sport. However, a diet of football alone must deprive boys of the range of skills that girls are picking up daily - articulation, manual dexterity, social interactions and all the things which make it possible to read and analyse anything more than the league

tables. The result is girls forging ahead, and boys with a lack of enthusiasm for anything that involves reading books without pictures, a narrowness of outlook, and an incapacity to communicate in anything other than Graham-Taylor-speak.

It used to be said that boys, developing later, would catch up in the final years of school, particularly over A-levels. But this year's results showed that, if anything, the opposite is true. For the first time girls performed pretty much as well as boys in science and maths; my own guess is that examiners' and teachers' low expectations of girls have always depressed their results. New methods of assessment, which make the outcome less reliant on the all-or-nothing final papers, have lessened the impact of this bias, and we are now seeing a truer reflection of girls' abilities.

However, all is not lost for the male of the species. A number of football clubs are beginning to recognise that their responsibility lies beyond the terraces; Peterborough United, for example, is reinventing itself as a patron of the arts. Arsenal and others are pioneering the equivalent of America's

These are people for whom applying to a welfare-to-work scheme, the Big Idea for their salvation, is an intellectual challenge the size of Mount Everest

football scholarships, encouraging boys who would like to be professionals to compete for places with the club, not just with their feet but with their brains. There is even some talk of roping football clubs into homework schemes for schoolchildren. If football is indeed part of the problem, it could also turn out to be part of the solution. And when, later this year, the big clubs get permission to start their own TV channels, maybe there should be a requirement on them to make an effort to persuade their young viewers to learn to read and write. After all, the head and the feet can work at the same time; the former captain of Brazil, the world's greatest footballing nation, was a certain Brasileiro Sampaio de Oliveira, DPhil; not for nothing was his playing name Socrates.

Not everything shrinks with movie therapy

GLENDA COOPER



Stuffed into the sofa, you can't move after the over-indulgence of Christmas and are thus trapped by the horrors of the festive season. Worse, you only realise this when you have just watched with horrible fascination 20 minutes of the World's Strongest Man competition.

You cannot budge until you know whether the Swede, the Dane or the Finn will lift more slot machines, run round and round carrying a rock (an ancient Icelandic custom apparently) and push a truck across the finishing line first. (For your information, I think it was the Finn but all the muscles started to look alike after a bit.) That is the nightmare of Christmas.

Watching Christmas specials or films you've seen zillions of times (I made a personal vow not to stay up for *Airplane* this year) always seemed an occupational hazard of the season. But thanks to Bernie Wooster - Britain's first film therapist - I've come to look at this in a different light.

Mr Wooster prescribes

various films to help people come to terms with their problems. Recently MGM asked him to endorse *The Wizard of Oz* which has just been rereleased. He was happy to agree as he thinks characters in the film are useful role models.

The idea is that if you are woolly-headed and unintelligent you identify with the Scarecrow, mechanical and going through the motions you bond with the Tin Man; tense and frightened you concentrate on the Lion and thus work out how to deal with your inadequacies. As I tend to go through all those emotions within half an hour of reaching work, I came to the conclusion I should be watching *The Wizard* rather than *The Big Breakfast* every morning.

For most people, New Year's resolutions, apart from putting the lid back on the toothpaste and not drinking more than the level recommended by the Department of Health, usually include some sort of inner improvement. However most of us never manage it. There is al-

ways therapy but it is worth waiting 10 years to unscramble your psyche and then find that you've managed to scramble some new parts of it in the process?

So Mr Wooster's film therapy may be the answer: films rarely last more than two hours and bingo - a newer better you! For *The Wizard of Oz* is not the only film which Mr Wooster feels can help. He recommends *The Full Monty* for those who are feeling the problems of redundancy, *Pretty Woman* for those with boyfriend problems (so does that mean become a hooker, girls, and he'll fall in love?) and *Rebecca* for those in a second marriage who feel haunted by the shadow of a previous partner (presumably you end up feeling that your husband may have been married to the most exquisite woman in the world but at least you don't have recurring dreams about bloody Manderley and Judith Anderson isn't hanging around).

And what better time to achieve good karma than the festive period when there are more than 900 films on the telly.

In that lot there must be some sort of panacea for every phobia, neurosis and bad habit.

A quick flick through *Radio Times* supplies the answer. For thirtysomethings trying to decide whether to have children or a career, *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York* puts forward the pros and cons concisely (girls, would you really want risk giving birth to a child like Macaulay Culkin?). Or do you feel shy and insecure about your performance in the discotheque? *Pulp Fiction* provides some useful hints and a step-by-step guide to asking that woman of your dreams to dance. Finding it difficult to achieve closure in that relationship? Watch *Game With The Wind*, (which can also be combined for women hoping to pick up tips on how to set up their own sawmill business).

But just as experts warn that conventional treatment can harm as well as benefit you, potentially there are worrying consequences of watching the wrong film. How many people have chosen banking as a career

under the impression Jim Carrey gave them that they get to wear a magic mask and meet Camerun Diaz? In years to come we could see an influx of cats in psychiatric wards feeling that they're never going to get on in the rat race after exposure to *Tom and Jerry - The Movie*. And giving up the veil to become a governess to a large brood of Austrians does not inevitably mean you get to marry Christopher Plummer. Honest.

Most worrying of all, are there even now hordes of people setting aside any hint of scepticism and roaming parties repeating in an annoying voice: "Life is like a box of chocolates Forrest. You never know what you're going to get." Social services are going to be picking up the bill in 30 years for those poor innocents exposed to *Furthest Gump*. At the end of the day, that great movie maker himself Samuel Goldwyn would have a word for those seeking therapy through films: anyone who goes to see a shrink needs their head examined.

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16/OBITUARIES

Frank Muir



Frank Muir, writer and broadcaster: born Ramsgate, Kent 5 February 1920; Assistant Head, BBC Light Entertainment Group 1960-64; Head of Entertainment, London Weekend Television 1968-69; President, Johnson Society, Lichfield 1975-76; Rector, St Andrews University 1977-79; CBE 1980; married 1949 Polly McIlvaine (one son, one daughter); died Thorpe, Surrey 2 January 1998.

Before Frank Muir and Denis Norden, scriptwriting was not seen as a profession, and in fact it has never really developed beyond what they chose to describe as "a cottage industry" - that is, two blokes in a room inventing humour. It's a far cry from the American "Ten writers, no waiting" approach, but has produced as much good comedy as the high-tech American method.

That it is as it is, is in many ways down to Muir and Norden, who proved that a scriptwriter was more than, to use Frank

Muir's phrase, "a comedian's labourer".

In a way, Frank Muir was two people. A carefully honed foppishness, the pink bow tie, the lisp, the tweeds and the retired lieutenant-colonel manner, hid from most people the astute, creative and, above all, authoritative writer.

With Denis Norden, his long-term partner, both as writer and television and radio panellist, he penned some of the most memorable radio comedies. *Breakfast With Braden*, *Take It From Here* (from which *The Glums* sprang) and much else besides. Together they wrote for television *Whack-O!*, starring Jimmy Edwards, with whom Muir had a particular affinity, and, again for Edwards, *The Seven Faces of Jim*.

I suppose that for many viewers Muir will be remembered as the suave and beguiling team leader on the television panel game *Call My Bluff* where, whether in harness with Patrick Campbell or later with Arthur Marshall, and under the beady eye of Robert Robinson, he spun fantasies and elegant descriptions of obscure words, thus baffling his opponents and viewers alike.

He became, with Denis Norden, the (almost) ever-present member of the quartet which made the quarter-century or so of BBC Radio's *My Word!* and *My Music* and massively entertained a world-wide audience which rejoiced in the humour and the erudition of those programmes.

Later, also on radio, in the series *Frank Muir Goes Into...*, a ragbag of comic moments

from the BBC archives, he held the centre with unfaltering skill.

Behind the scenes of BBC Television, again with Denis Norden, Muir advised the corporation on their comedy output and was later head of comedy at the BBC before crossing over to ITV as head of comedy at the newborn London Weekend Television, where, in spite of some flops, notably *We Have Ways of Making You Laugh* (which optimistic boast proved unfounded), he conjured up such long-running successes as *Please Sir* and *On the Buses*.

When the management team resigned on *bloc* in protest at the sacking of the programme controller, Cyril Bennett, Muir returned to radio and, in addition, became a skilful writer of children's books based on the character and behaviour of the Muir family dog, What-a-Mess. The first book, published in 1977, was followed by 16 other volumes describing in charming detail the adventures of this accident-prone Afghan hound.

The collections of *My Word!* anecdotes, reproducing Muir and Norden's tortuous puns, *You Can't Have Your Kebab and Heat It* (1973) being a typical example, sit happily on the shelves with other of his written works, including the massive *The Oxford Book of Humorous Prose* from William Caxton to P.G. Wodehouse (1989).

In a way, Muir seemed like a Wodehouse character, a snuff-taking clubman (the Garrick was his favourite watering hole) and a dandy, his style of dress being in a way his visual signature tune. He was, in fact, more

Jeeves than Wooster, usually getting things right. His one novel, *The Walpole Orange*, published in 1993, was set in a West End gentlemen's club and was, to be honest, patchy. It had great moments, but touches of fustian, too.

His autobiography, *A Kenish Lad*, published last autumn, went at once into the best-sellers' list. In it he recorded anecdotes of his childhood and his RAF service, which was spent largely in Iceland, where he was stationed as an aerial photographer. He commented, "When we had a plane we didn't have a camera, and when we had a camera we didn't have a plane." But his natural gifts found expression in entertaining his fellow airmen and these blossomed after the war into a successful career in the professional world of scriptwriting.

For three years he was the Rector of St Andrews University, which he says was "spending three lovely years attending church with a terrific choir". Muir, a devout Anglican, is quoted as saying: "I think there is some kind of after-life, but it's not pearly gates. I wish it to remain a mystery."

Week after week, the film takeoffs which ended the show glittered with outrageous puns

When I first came to England as a drama student and heard Frank Muir and Denis Norden's *Take It From Here*, I assumed I was listening to a radio adaptation of an S.J. Perelman piece, so brilliant was the wordplay, writes Dick Vosburgh.

Week after week, the film takeoffs which ended the show glittered with outrageous puns

... Shakespeare shouting to the landlord of the Mermaid Tavern, "See what the boys in the buckram will have!" ... Dracula saying to a potential victim, "Won't you join me in the old-fashioned vaults?" Or a New York gangster who - having been told that the police have thrown a cordon around the area, stretching all the way down to the Staten Island ferry - exclaims: "You mean there's a ferry at the bottom of our cordon?" In another sketch, Sherlock Holmes said to Lady Baskerville, "Surely deep, deep down, your guardian has some ideas or theories about this spectral hound?" - only to be told, "Yes, there are theories at the bottom of my guardian."

In 1956 Muir and Norden were finally given the opportunity to deliver such extravagant puns in person, when the radio literary quiz *My Word!* took the air. Each would be asked to give, by the end of the programme, the origin of various quotations. The inventions by both men were brilliant, but my favourite was Muir's fandango around the song title "Come into the Garden, Maud". He told a sad story about joining a yacht club and falling madly in love with a member called Carmen. On hearing that his adored one and a yachtsman called Toothy Gordon had "sailed together into the harbour of matrimony and were moored together for life", he confessed that he could do nothing but sit and mutter again and again:

"Carmen... Toothy Gordon... Moored!"



'A cottage industry': Muir, left, with Denis Norden in 1954

Photograph: Popperfoto

Blue chips a

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Helen Wills Moody

Helen Wills, tennis player: born Berkeley, California 6 October 1905; winner, Ladies' Singles, American Lawn Tennis Championship 1923, 1924, 1925, 1927, 1928, 1929, 1931; winner, Women's Singles, English Lawn Tennis Championship 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1933, 1935, 1938; winner, Ladies' Singles, French Lawn Tennis Championship 1927, 1928, 1929, 1930; married 1929 Frederick Moody (marriage dissolved 1937), 1939 Aidan Roark (marriage dissolved); died Carmel, California 1 January 1998.

She came out of California, trained to be a tennis champion, determined to win the prizes of consequence in her sport. She was a private person performing on a public stage, playing the game with unerring accuracy and control, refusing to reveal her emotions to frequently outclassed and overwhelmed opponents. Above all else, Helen Wills Moody was a person who knew precisely what she wanted in life and achieved most of her goals with meticulous care for her craft and high intelligence, seldom looking back on anything she had done with remorse or frustration.

This remarkable American achieved on an astounding scale from the early 1920s until the late 1930s, producing a record few could ever hope to equal or surpass. In that memorable stretch of time, "Little Miss Pok-



Helen Wills at Wimbledon in 1924 Photograph: Hulton Getty

er Face" was victorious seven times in her native American Championships at Forest Hills (now known as the US Open), came through four times to win the French Championships in Paris, and captured eight singles titles on the fabled lawns of Wimbledon, where she was beaten only once in 56 matches. She was unofficially ranked as the best player in the world

no fewer than nine times. At one stage between 1927 and 1933, she did not lose a single set, let alone a match.

But Helen Wills Moody was worthy of praise for more than the sum of her accomplishments. She set herself apart with the size and scope of her competitive appetite, demonstrating an uncommon courage and composure when it twice ap-

peared as if her career might be over.

Appendicitis abruptly curtailed her activities in 1926 when she was only 20, but she restored herself convincingly by the following year. Then, after a debilitating back injury kept her out of the game in 1934, she returned with complete conviction in 1935 to win her penultimate Wimbledon championship. Finally, in 1938, nearing the age of 33, she ruled at the All England Club for the last time when most of the cognoscenti had virtually given up on her.

She was a baseline player who could drive the ball with more pace and depth off the ground than any of her rivals. She dominated her matches with both power and precision, cutting down her opponents by directing the ball rhythmically and relentlessly from corner to corner, forcing foes into mistakes by virtue of her extraordinary command of the court.

The combination of her placid demeanour and her assertive style of play was what made her a champion of the highest order; neither the strategic framework of her game nor her supreme belief in herself could ever be called into question. As the revered *New York Times* writer Allison Danzig put it:

Power under control and the ability to hit the ball harder than any other woman on the courts were responsible for the rise of Miss Wills. The ability to mask her feelings, to maintain an inscrutable countenance in the face of the vicissitudes of match

play, was the characteristic that made the deepest impression upon the tennis galleries.

Wills Moody's upbringing surely had much to do with her successes later in life. Her father, Clarence Wills, was a surgeon who got her started with tennis when she was eight. Her mother, Catherine Anderson Wills, was a University of California graduate who played an even more crucial role in the evolution of this immensely driven woman. Mrs Wills was an undernourished, as Helen, a quiet leader providing strength when it was most needed. She attended all of Helen's tournaments from 1921 to 1930, and shared an unusually warm and close relationship with her daughter, Helen, too, attended the University of California, learning to sketch and draw with admirable skill, even remarking fleetingly at the time, "Art will be my life."

Not surprisingly, she was an honour student, a Phi Beta Kappa who remarked of her time in the classroom: "I had a complete lack of interest in learning for the sake of knowing something. I was, in the truest sense of the word, a 'cup hunter' in the field of scholarship."

Be that as it may, she distinguished herself with her fine sketches, making drawings of many of the women she competed against. But her talent outside the confines of the tennis court did not stop there. As the *New York Herald Tribune*

correspondent Al Laney once recalled, Wills Moody could put her pen to useful purposes, writing respectable articles for the London newspapers in the 1930s. As Laney said:

She did all right financially while abroad by writing for the London papers. I heard at the time what the figure was for the pieces, but I have forgotten, although I still am able to report that tennis champions were paid at a much higher rate in those days for reporting tennis than regular tennis writers. In fairness to Miss Wills, I must say that they were very well written pieces and I was assured that she wrote them herself, entirely without professional help. I was impressed with her literary talent.

Clearly, however, she was most gifted when she held a racket in her hand, moving with serenity and authority through the major championships. In assessing the impact of her career a few years ago, the 1947 Wimbledon champion Jack Kramer said:

I was convinced at one time - and things have changed with Martina Navratilova coming along to play so well on grass, with Steffi Graf looking for so long like a world beater, and with Monica Seles taking over with her new style of game - but for the longest while I thought that Helen Wills Moody was right up there with Pauline Betz as the best woman players I have ever seen.

I played against Helen Wills. Helen Jacobs and Alice Marble when I was the US boys' champion. I felt I was quite a good player for a 15-year-old, but Helen was a very tough match for me while Jacobs and Marble who were also fine players were not up to her calibre. Later on I played mixed doubles with her when she was in her forties and it was hard to believe how good she was.

Remarkably, despite all of

her prodigious successes, the most famous contest she played resulted in a defeat. Facing the incomparably charismatic Frenchwoman Suzanne Lenglen at Cannes in February 1926 for the one and only time in their careers, Wills was beaten 6-3, 8-6 in what the renowned dress designer and authoritative critic Ted Tining called "the first big show-business match in the history of tennis, the sort of predecessor for Billie Jean King and Bobby Riggs in 1973".

The high drama of the occasion was justified in light of the greatness of the two competitors. They were universally regarded as the two greatest players of the first half of the 20th century, and this confrontation was a unique chapter in their productive lives. The best of Wills Moody as a player was certainly ahead of her while Lenglen's most dominant days were nearly over. In any case, recalling the moment of that match 60 years after it happened, Wills Moody was amusingly irreverent about it all. "The first thing I remember," she said in 1986,

is that my mother did not want me to go. My father didn't see much point in it either. I just don't know why I thought it was the end of the world to leave the University of California to go to the South of France. Why did I? I almost cried I wanted to go so much. I begged and begged, and looking back it doesn't make any sense at all.

In any event, Helen Wills Moody always handled her private life with dignity and with-

out any unnecessary fuss or excitement. She divorced Fred Moody, a stockbroker, in 1937 after eight years of marriage, then married Aidan Roark, a film writer, two years later. This second marriage lasted much longer, but she was divorced from Roark in the early 1970s.

By then, still living in her beloved California, she had become something of a recluse, but her friends and former associates understood her need to isolate herself. "In the latter stages of her life," recalled Kramer,

she just happened to want to be alone and that was fine. Nothing could disturb her when she wanted something. She would make up her mind that she was going to do something in a certain way, and that was the way it usually was. She was a very nice person, very considerate, and a quality individual all the way.

Ted Tining had seen this side of Helen Wills Moody long before the end of her life, and he correlated her attitude to her striking appearance. "With the exception of Garbo," explained Tining,

I have seen all the best-looking women in the world face-to-face and, in the beauty stakes, Helen Wills was very definitely in the top league. She had a flawless complexion with her facial bone structure and her finely chiselled features were reminiscent of a piece of serene classical sculpture. In dramatic contrast, she had the Marlene Dietrich technique of a conversation.

She was certainly the Garbo of tennis, always wanting to be alone and away from her fellow competitors.

— Steve Pink

Birthdays

TODAY: Brigadier Sir John Amsey, former President, National Savings Committee, 91; Mr David Atherton, music director, Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, 54; Mr John Bamforth, former Principal, Lincoln College, Oxford, 77; Mr Michael Barratt, television presenter, 70; Mr Victor Borge, musician and comedian, 89; Mr Keith Brookman, General Secretary, Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, 60; Sir Robin Butler, Secretary of the Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service, 66; Professor Sir Bryan Cansberg, Secretary General, International Accounting Standards Committee, 59; Mr Fran Cotton, former rugby international, 50; Sir Alastair Forbes, former judge, 90; Mr Mel Gibson, actor, 43; Mr Richard Hasbun-Jensen, Lord-Lieutenant of Gwent, 73; Sir Roy Harding, educationist, 74; Mr John Paul Jones, rock musician and producer, 52; Admiral Sir Michael Layard, former Second Sea Lord, Chief of Naval Personnel, 62; Miss Anna Lindan (Lady Sainsbury of Preston Candover), former ballerina, 65; Sir George Martin, chairman, Air group, 71; Mr Eric Marlowe MP, 49; Sir Carol Mather, former MP, 79; Mr Siegmund Nissel, former member of the Amadeus Quartet, 76; Sir John Riddell, former royal equerry, 64; Miss Eirlys Roberts, former Deputy Director, Consumers' Association, 87; Mr Graham Ross Russell, Chairman, Securities Institute, 64; Mr Robert Suedman, architect, 69; Mr Matthew Taylor MP, 55; Mr John Thaw, actor,

56; Mr David Vine, BBC sports commentator, 62.
TOMORROW: Mrs Jackie Ballard MP, 44; Miss Grace Bumbly, opera and concert singer, 61; Miss Dyan Cannon, actress, 59; Mr Alexander Chanceller, journalist, founding editor of the *Independent Magazine*, 83; Capt Sir Ivar Colquhoun of Luss Bt, Chief of the Clan Colquhoun, 82; Mr Iain Cuthbertson, actor, 68; Mr Alan Dyer, former Chief Constable, Bedfordshire, 64; Professor Keith Hancock, economist, 63; Lt-Cdr Sir Ian Clark Hutchinson, a member of the Queen's Body Guard for Scotland, 95; Professor Brian Josephson, physicist, 58; Air Vice-Marshal Richard Kyle, 55; Professor Lance Lanyon, Principal, Royal Veterinary College, 54; Mr John McLaughlin, blues and jazz guitarist, 55; Miss Margaret Marshall, concert and opera singer, 49; Mr Mick Mills, footballer, 49; Mr Floyd Patterson, boxer, 63; Mr Nicholas Payne, Director, Royal Opera, Covent Garden, 53; Baroness Pitkeathley, chief executive, Careers National Association, 57; Mr Timothy Rix, publisher, 64; Miss Barbara Rush, actress, 68; Mrs Phyllis Starkey MP, 50; Sir Alan Thomas, chairman, Firth Holdings plc, 55; Mrs Audrey Wise MP, 63; Miss Jane Wyman, actress, 84.

Changing of the Guard

TODAY: The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment moves the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. In the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, the Queen's Life Guard is replaced by the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.

FAITH & REASON

The cross which falls across the cradle

Christmas has not yet come for the Eastern Church, which celebrates it next week. It will be an altogether more muted affair than that in the West. Andrew Walker, a member of the Russian Orthodox Church, explains why.

As Western Christians prepare for Epiphany it might come as a surprise to learn that the Eastern Orthodox Church makes at least as much of it, if not more, than Christmas. This is partly a question of history. Christmas is the last of the great liturgical feasts to be incorporated into the Church's calendar. The Nativity was not celebrated in any major way before the third century, and the 25th of December not generally fixed as Christmas Day until the end of the fourth century. By that time the

Eastern Church was already celebrating Epiphany as one of its great feasts, second in importance only to Easter.

Over time Christmas came to equal Epiphany in significance but it never overwhelmed it or shunted it aside. Culturally, also, the Orthodox Church has never capitulated to the consumerism of Western Xmas. St Nicholas has never transmuted into the Father Christmas of Western Europe, or into the Santa Claus of North America.

It is true that bishops in the Russian church will sometimes stand in for St Nicholas and distribute, or at least hand over, presents to Orthodox children after Christmas Day but this is in no sense linked to the notion of a commercial festive season: presents, if they exist at all, are modest and more a gesture of generosity - of Christian largesse - than giving children their "heart's desire". There are certainly local festive customs, such as the eat-

ing of carp on Christmas Day, for example, but on the whole Christmas is a thoroughly muted affair compared to its Western counterpart.

But perhaps the really interesting differences between Eastern and Western Christmas are theological. Eastern theology is governed by the Easter Event. The "joy to the world" of Western Christmas is centred in Eastern liturgy on the great Easter shout of "Christ is Risen" and the affirmation of the people that "he is risen indeed". Christmas in looking forward to Easter shares in that joy but also foreshadows the tragedy of the fact that the child born to be king also came to die. Even in one of his famous hymns to the Nativity, St Ephrem (c306-373) writes of the child who will defeat death by death: "Let us thank him who killed death by his dying." And in a famous Russian icon the angel Gabriel carries a cross to the Nativity where it casts a shadow over the manger.

This joy tinged with sadness and sobriety is reflected also in the fact that the great feast is approached through fasting until the day of rejoicing arrives. (In an age of conspicuous consumption we might call this a political statement.) But perhaps the most interesting feature of Orthodox Christmas is that it is an experience that the Church keeps to itself. It is almost as if Christmas is a secret. When the Holy One of God entered the world as a vulnerable mewling babe, only Joseph and Mary, some shepherds, and a few wise men had any inkling what earth-shattering event had taken place. God was incarnate in a mystery that was not yet for public unveiling. Indeed as Orthodox tradition puts it there was no room for Mary and Jesus in the inn, so, as human society had rejected the mother literally pregnant with divinity, "the earth of ferret the cave to him... who from all eternity is God".

And it is against this background

of public rejection, of a hushed celebration by the people of God, of a confident confidentiality by those loyal to the Christ-child, that the great celebration of Epiphany makes sense. Christmas may belong to the inner life of the Church, but Epiphany is the time when the secret is out, not merely shouted from the rooftops but confirmed from the heavens. As the *kontakion* for Epiphany says of Christ, "Thou art manifested today to the whole world." This public revelation is not only of Jesus as the God-Man prefiguring his passion by dying and rising again from the waters of baptism, but of God being manifested in trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

At Christmas the Church guards the boy-king from the prying eyes of the merely curious and the enemies of God, but at Epiphany the Church confesses that the man-king is lord of lords whose kingdom is now at hand and whose reign shall last for ever.

Blue chips advance into the new year amid light trading

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Shares started the year on a high note with Footsie rising 58 points to 5,193.5. But the half-day session at the end of the festive fortnight seemed unreal, with few stock market men in attendance and little investment interest.

Even so, Footsie's display was in sharp contrast to the opening day of last year when the index fell 61.1. Then, of course, it went on to hit a succession of new highs, confounding most observers.

As Richard Kersley of BZW points out: "The strength of the bull run was missed by everyone. Most observers, ourselves included, began the year with a worried view of bond markets and saw equities in a similar light."

The opening advance looked fragile. A handful of buy orders, very little selling, more new year tips and futures

interest provided sufficient incentive to push prices ahead. Turnover was an insignificant 130.7 million shares and the session was dubbed a "waste of time" by some market men.

Footsie gave ground in the last few minutes of trading. The fall, 10.3 points, was much less than on New Year's Eve when the index dropped 31.8 points before the Stock Exchange adjusted some share prices and a revised calculation was produced.

Halfway, one of the shares revalued upwards, was one of the few financial falls. It lost 4p to 760p. Most, reflecting expectations of further take-over action this year, moved ahead. Abbey National, rarely far from corporate speculation, put on 23p to 1,114p.

Insurances pushed ahead. General Accident, lowered by 40p on New Year's Eve after

the Stock Exchange rethink, had the audacity to recover all its imposed loss - gaining 40p to 1,095p. Other insurances higher included Prudential Corporation and Legal & General.

Retailers drew some comfort from the John Lewis trading statement which showed higher December sales bolstered by a late rush.

The January sales got off to a good start with double figure gains. It was enough to edge Next 10p higher to 708p and Marks & Spencer 5.5p to 604.5p.

Bass, selling its betting shops to Ladbroke for £375.5m, put on 9.5p to 954p. The brewer is thought to be attempting to clinch a hotel take over. Ladbroke rose 4p to 268p.

Dalgety firmed to 279.5p. The sale of its food ingredients

division is due to be announced this month. Cash rich Associated British Foods is thought to be interested but could run into monopoly problems.

Southern Electric, the only quoted survivor of the 12 regional electricity companies floated seven years ago, hardened 18p to a 524p peak. It is expected to attract a predator

soon - possibly, if Westminster clearance can be obtained, one of the generators.

Others to attract modest interest on takeover hopes included Reckitt & Colman and Greenalls. R&C is regarded as a likely Unilever acquisition; Greenalls is seen as a possible target for Allied Domecq or even Whitbread.

There is a suggestion Allied and Bass could make a joint bid with Allied setting for the pubs and wholesaling operation and Bass the hotels. Any Whitbread assault would probably herald the end of the group's brewing involvement.

Nycomed Amersham led the Footsie leader board with a 100p gain to 2,250p. EMI, the showbiz group, gained 22p to 530p, reflecting a new year up.

The arrival of an Information Technology sector continued to spur most of the 88

constituents. Logica hardened 20p to a 1,177.5p peak and Sherwood International also hit a high with a 40p gain to 572.5p. Mays, the sector's biggest company, put on 12.5p to 1,842.5p, also a record.

CNC Properties firmed to 85p. Channel Hotels and Properties and associates now control almost 30 per cent of the capital. Last year CNC, the old Clarke Nickolls & Coombs sweets business, disclosed a mystery takeover approach. One name in the frame was Wiggins, the property group. But the bidder walked away. Wiggins closed at a 13.25p peak.

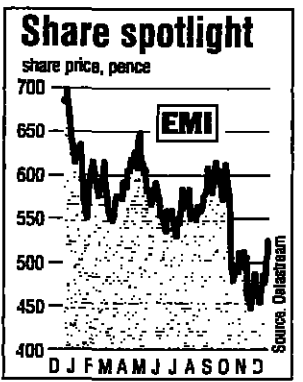
Enviromed, the healthcare group where bidders are thought to lurk, fell 1.5p to 11p and Shield Diagnostic, last year's top performing share, gave up 22.5p to 665p on the inevitable take profits advice.

TAKING STOCK

With a few exceptions football club shares have failed to score with investors. One of the worst performers is Loftus Road, controlled by entertainment tycoon Chris Wright. The shares, seemingly weighed down by a steady stream of small sell orders, fell 2.5p to 29.5p, a new low. A few months after being floated at 72p in October 1996 they touched 106.5p.

The loss-making group has ambitious expansion plans but its two operations, the Queens Park Rangers football club and Wasps rugby club, have failed to perform, with QPR stuck in the middle reaches of Nationwide Division One and Wasps near the bottom of the Allied Dunbar Premiership.

Head hunter Whitehead Mann climbed 18.5p to a 217.5p peak; there is talk of a US strike.



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where noted. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional. Other details: Ex rights = Ex-dividend; Ex-A = Ex-Assets; Ex-S = Ex-Superdividend; Ex-P = Ex-Paid; Ex-PA = Ex-PAID. All prices are Bloomberg Generals.

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ITS plc, London EC2A 4EP.

Seq. volume: 100.7m trades 9.07

Market Leaders: Top 20 volumes

at 8.55pm

FTSE 100 index by hour

Open 5205.2 Up 22.7

1000 5205.2 Up 22.7

1500 5205.2 Up 22.7

Close 5205.2 Up 22.7

52 week High Low Stock Price Chg Yld P/E Code

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BT to 'cold call' 15 million customers to fight off challenge from rival networks

British Telecom is embarking on the UK's largest-ever customer "cold-calling" initiative, with plans to ring 15 million of its domestic subscribers at least four times a year. Chris Godsmark, Business Correspondent, examines BT's bid to fight off the competitive challenge from rival networks.

For the bulk of BT's residential customers the new year will bring more than a post-Christmas hangover. Some 15 million households, those which are not members of low-spending budget plans, are about to receive the first "cold-call" from one of BT's recently established call centres.

BT said yesterday that it would ring these customers four times, amounting to at least 60 million separate calls, every 12 months. The two-pronged strategy aims to ensure customers are satisfied with BT's existing service, including identifying any discounts not claimed, while attempting to sell extra products such as a second phone line.

Most customers will be called in the evening or at weekends, when they are likely to be at home, though BT said it would abide by a telemarketing code of practice. A spokesman defended the plan, arguing homes would not be rung up early in the morning, or after 9pm each night. Homes which objected to being called could opt out of the campaign, though BT insisted most customers were happy.

"We don't regard this as cold-calling, because we already have an ongoing relationship with these customers. We write to them eight times each year anyway," said the spokesman.

The approach, easily the biggest cold-calling exercise in the UK so far, is supported by BT's £100m investment in call centres, which has so far created around 3,000 new jobs. The newest two telemarketing centres opened recently at Doncaster and Gosforth on North Tyneside, each with 650 telemarketing terminals.

Operators are given pre-programmed calls from computer tapes, which provide information on customers' existing calling patterns, and read their questions from the terminal screen. The staff mostly work part time and earn commission for products sold



Calling the nation: Call centres for telephone-based selling have become one of the biggest growth areas of the 1990s

Photograph: Tom Pilsto

to supplement basic pay of about £4.50 an hour. Operators are graded in league tables, monitoring the amount of new business generated. Call Centres have become one of the big growth areas of the 1990s with financial services companies such as First Direct and Direct Line establishing bases for their telephone-based businesses.

The move is BT's latest response to the challenge from competitors such as the cable companies, who are signing up new residential customers, mostly poached

from BT, at the rate of about 150,000 a month. The biggest cable group, Cable & Wireless Communications, laid down the gauntlet to BT last year with a £50m advertising campaign.

Last month Ofel, the UK telecoms watchdog, raised its forecast for the erosion of BT's domestic customer base, predicting that its share of residential exchange lines would drop to 70 per cent by 2000, from around 91 per cent today. BT's share of national calls made would, according to

Ofel, fall to just 50 per cent, while the group would account for just 40 per cent of international calls.

The cold-calling campaign aims not just to hold on to customers, but to offset the damage from competition by encouraging homes to use the phone more often. BT claims the strategy has already paid dividends, with 14 million customers now members of the Friends and Family scheme, around double the membership a year ago. BT has combined the cold-calling policy

with an advertising strategy increasingly shifted towards promoting special offers and discounted services such as Friends and Family. In the most recent case this saw Christmas adverts promoting a 20 per cent discount off one Friends and Family number, despite the fact that the price reduction does not take effect until May. The campaigns, more aggressive than the "good to talk" approach of the past, are the brainchild of Ed Carter, BT's American marketing adviser.

Promise of disposals lifts ICI

Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI) is planning to sell what remains of its industrial chemicals businesses in the coming year, in a move which could raise £1.2bn. Peter Thal Larsen reports on the next stage of the chemical giant's massive restructuring.

The news came as ICI announced the completion of the sale of its polyester polymer businesses to DuPont, which was announced in July. The group also said further "substantial" disposals could be expected in 1998. ICI shares firmed 8p to 959p.

According to experts, businesses on the block include ICI's North American titanium dioxide interests; its Runcorn-based chlorine-manufacturing subsidiary and divisions making polymers and chemicals that replace ozone-destroying CFC gases.

Several announcements are expected before ICI reports its annual results in February. An ICI spokesman said the group was in talks about several potential deals, but refused to comment on specific cases.

Charles Miller-Smith, ICI's chief executive, has mapped out a future for the group in which it pulls out of cyclical, capital-intensive bulk chemicals in favour of specialised chemicals with a high value-added content.

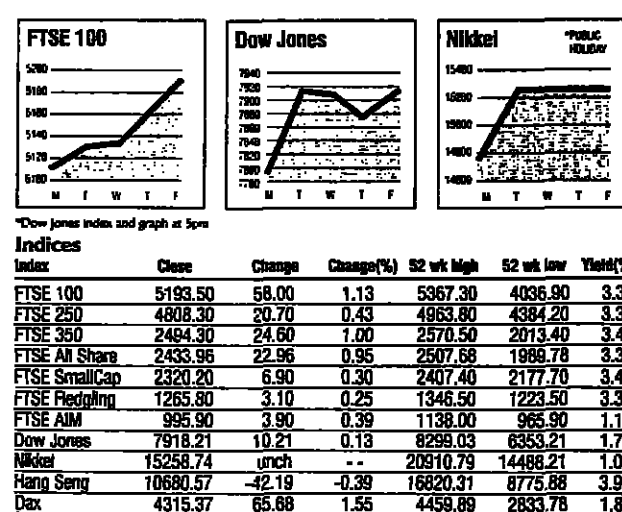
That strategy inspired the acquisition of Unilever's specialty chemicals businesses in July for £4.9bn. ICI subsequently targeted £3bn of disposals over three years to reduce debt. But in a whirlwind of activity it has raised £3.6bn in just six months.

Now the group is keen to complete the transition. Analysts also think ICI wants to pursue smaller bolt-on acquisitions in specialty chemicals. Further disposals would give it the firepower to do so.

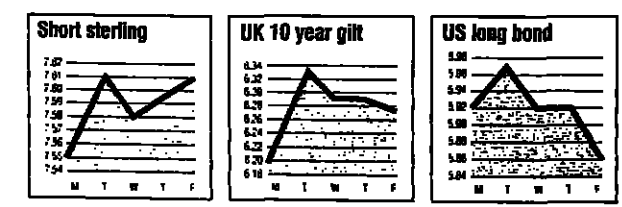
"Basically, anything outside the paints, materials and specialty chemicals divisions is up for sale," said Phillip Morris, chemicals analyst at Nikko Securities.

ICI's recent disposals have been sold for a multiple of about one times annual sales. But experts reckon the remaining businesses will fetch more modest prices. By applying a sales multiple of 0.6 to the industrial division's remaining £2.5bn turnover, Merrill Lynch analyst Robyn Coombe calculates that the unit is worth £1.2bn.

STOCK MARKETS



INTEREST RATES

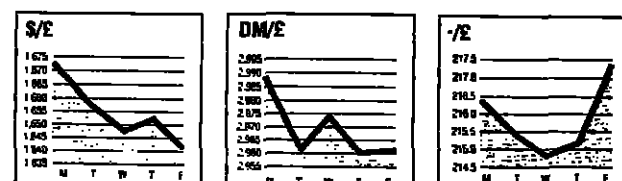


Money Market Rates	3 month 1 yr clip	1 year	1 yr clip	18 mos	1 yr	Long bond	1 yr clip
UK	7.67	1.14	7.69	0.85	6.27	-1.43	6.23
US	5.81	0.25	5.84	0.13	5.67	-0.84	5.66
Japan	0.78	0.29	0.73	0.16	1.94	-0.83	2.58
Germany	3.63	0.48	3.94	0.69	5.32	-0.63	5.90

MAIN PRICE CHANGES

Rises	Price (pt)	Chg (pt)	% Chg	Falls	Price (pt)	Chg (pt)	% Chg
Danka Bus Syst	256.00	21.00	8.94	Avia Europe	170.00	-3.00	-1.73
Medeva	171.00	9.50	5.56	Amescap	515.00	-3.00	-0.58
Nycomed Amer	2250.00	100.00	4.45	NFC	180.00	-1.50	-0.83
RMC	887.00	37.00	4.35	Brit Biotech	103.00	-1.00	-0.96

CURRENCIES



Pound	at 100	Change	Yr Ago	Dollar	at 100	Change	Yr Ago
Dollar	1.6415	-0.10c	1.5898	Sterling	0.6082	+0.04c	0.5918
D-Mark	2.9602	+0.10pt	2.6181	D-Mark	1.8029	+0.39pt	1.5417
Yen	217.42	+Y2.93	196.48	Yen	132.45	+Y1.86	115.45
Silver	104.50	+0.10	95.80	Silver	109.70	+0.80	98.50

OTHER INDICATORS

at 100	Change	Yr Ago	Index	Chg	Yr Ago	Next Day
Brent Oil (\$)	15.96	0.92	24.37	GDP	113.90	3.70
Gold (\$)	288.15	-0.60	365.55	RPI	159.60	3.70
Silver (\$)	5.94	-0.05	4.77	Base Rates	7.25	6.00

www.bloomberg.com

source: Bloomberg

Surge in consumer borrowing dampens rate hopes

Figures showing a big rise in consumer credit in November, along with an upbeat trading statement from the John Lewis group, suggested pre-Christmas reports of a slowdown on the high street were exaggerated. It is not safe yet to rule out further interest rate increases, analysts concluded. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, gets the measure of seasonal spending.

New borrowing by consumers jumped by £1.2bn in November, according to Bank of England figures yesterday. It was the

biggest monthly increase since February, and undermined the widespread view that the summer spending boom is over.

Earlier figures showing slower growth in retail sales during the same month, and anecdotal evidence from stores, had fuelled hopes that there was already enough of a slowdown to persuade the Bank of England to hold off raising interest rates again. Many City economists predict at most one more rate rise, and that not before February when the economic picture will be clearer.

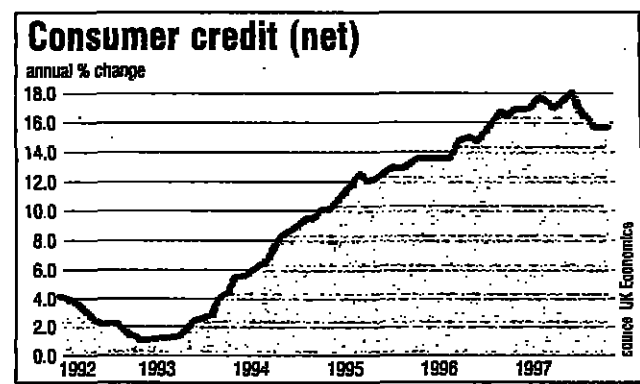
However, yesterday's evidence indicated that these hopes might yet prove premature.

The surprise November consumer credit rise was £300m higher than the previous month's figure. It took the annual growth rate in lending

up a fraction to 15.4 per cent, halting what had appeared to be a firm downward trend.

The increase was dominated by a £522m rise in loans advanced by "other specialist lenders", much of which could have been linked to car sales. In 1997 these reached the highest total for November.

The figures also confirmed bank and building society reports that mortgage lending was weaker at £1.9bn in November compared with £2.2bn the previous month. However, the annual growth rate for home loans remained unchanged at 5.9 per cent, well up from the previous year's pace of increase.



LCR set to award contracts for rail link tunnels

The construction of the high-speed Channel Tunnel rail link is set to take an important step forward with the award of contracts worth £550m for the tunnels which will carry the line into London's St Pancras station.

London & Continental Railways, the consortium selected to build the £5.4bn link, is expected to place the contracts early this month, laying to rest worries about whether the project would go ahead.

LCR had intended to award the tunnelling contracts before Christmas and the delay renewed fears that the financing of the project might be in difficulty. In November, the consortium quashed speculation that the 68-mile link might be built only as far as Stratford, east London, or Ebbsfleet in Kent as a cost-saving measure.

However, LCR is in talks with up to six other parties, including Railtrack, about alternative ways of financing or building the link.

The intention is to raise

funding in the middle of this year through the flotation of LCR and a debt issue. The share offer will raise £1bn-£1.5bn.

But it emerged yesterday that a number of the contractors bidding for work on the project might also be interested in taking small equity stakes in LCR. Tarmac and Balfour Beatty are thought to have been sounded out although it is not thought that either company would be prepared to put up a large sum of money.

The two contractors are in rival consortia bidding for the biggest single tunnelling contract - a £300m deal to dig 12 kilometres of tunnelling and a massive station box at Stratford, which will be one of the intermediate stations on the line.

According to some reports, the front-runner is a joint venture between Balfour Beatty and Amec, although other industry sources insist that the Tarmac consortium is still in the running.

Michael Harrison

Former Foreign Secretary joins F&C as a part-time director

Foreign & Colonial, the fund management group, has signed up its second former Conservative Cabinet minister as a non-executive director.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, the ex-Foreign Secretary, has been appointed a part-time director of Foreign & Colonial's Emerging Markets Investment Trust. The move follows the appointment last year of Kenneth Clarke, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, as non-executive director of F&C's flagship investment vehicle, the Investment Trust.

A spokeswoman for F&C declined to give Sir Malcolm's salary for the part-time post, which began on 1 January. However, Mr Clarke is being paid £18,000 for his job, which involves attending a board meeting for one day a month.

It is the third non-executive directorship Sir Malcolm has secured since losing his seat as MP for Edinburgh Pentlands to Labour at the last election. Last summer he was appointed

as non-executive director of Ramco Energy, the AIM-listed independent oil company based in Aberdeen. He is also non-executive international director of BHP Petroleum, the Australian oil company.

George Nissen, chairman of F&C's Emerging Markets IT said he was "delighted" at the move. "His breadth of knowledge will make a valuable contribution to the company."

Sir Malcolm is also the third senior Tory figure to sign up a non-executive directorship with an F&C trust. Apart from Mr Clarke, F&C has appointed Baroness Hogg, former adviser to John Major, as chairman of its Smaller Companies Investment Trust.

Of the former Cabinet ministers, Mr Clarke has been most successful in the hunt for outside jobs. On top of his £43,000 MP's salary, he has secured a £120,000 a year non-executive chairmanship of Unichem, along with jobs with BAT and F&C.

Chris Godsmark

Hong Kong sale to net Vodafone £100m

Vodafone is to net £100m from the sale of its stake in Hong Kong's fourth-largest mobile phone network, Pacific Link Communications.

The move follows a long-awaited HK\$4.84bn (£380m) deal signed on New Year's Eve between Pacific Link and Hongkong Telecom, the hugely profitable phone giant which is majority-owned by Cable & Wireless. Vodafone had a 35 per cent stake in Pacific Link, with the remainder owned by First Pacific, the conglomerate. The deal is expected to be completed by 5 January.

Vodafone said it would use the cash proceeds to reduce its borrowings, which were about £630m at the time of the group's last financial results. The operator's share price, which soared by 80 per cent last year, rose a further 6p to 445p on yesterday's news.

A spokesman said Vodafone had viewed Pacific Link as a non-core business, partly because it used the US digital

mobile standard, unlike the GSM digital technology employed by the UK group and across Europe. Vodafone also pointed to fierce competition between Hong Kong's 11 mobile networks.

In recent months Vodafone has bolstered its international strategy, offering to take a controlling interest in Libertel, the Dutch phone group and indicating it would exercise an option to raise its shareholding in SFR, the French digital mobile operator.

On Monday the four UK mobile operators will announce subscriber numbers for the last quarter of 1997, with bumper growth expected in the run-up to Christmas.

Analysts expect Vodafone and One2One to tie for first place, with increases of around 150,000 in their subscriber base. Orange, the newest network, is likely to be in third place, with Cellnet expected to show the smallest expansion.

Chris Godsmark

صكنا من الاميل



JEREMY WARNER CHECKS HIS PREDICTIONS FOR LAST YEAR AND LOOKS AHEAD TO WHAT'S IN STORE

Warning: turbulent market conditions ahead

It can be put off no longer. The reckoning has arrived—the time to review my predictions for last year. This is usually a humbling experience and no more so than this time round. I got Wall Street and the London stock markets completely wrong last year. In fact the FTSE 100 index rose 25 per cent, powered by financials and pharmaceuticals, and even the All Share finished the year a fifth higher. Worse still was my forecast for Wall Street, which I said would come seriously off the boil. The Dow finished the year more than 20 per cent up.

Fortunately, some of my other main forecasts were a little better. My prediction for the pound, which I said would remain strong because of rising interest rates, was closer the mark, and my reading of Japan was spot on. Tokyo, I said, would remain in the doldrums; Japanese stocks were still overvalued by international standards and there was no evidence of a revival in the Japanese economy.

I can also claim to have got the rest of the Far East partially correct, though for entirely the wrong reasons. I failed utterly to predict the economic crisis in the Pacific Rim economies—hardly alone in this—but I did forecast turmoil in the Far East. My belief was that this would be sparked not by the bursting of the region's investment bubble, but by the Hong Kong handover,

which I thought would prompt an international crisis with knock on consequences for financial markets. In fact the handover could hardly have been smoother. All in all then, I probably shouldn't be awarding myself any more than about 4 out of 10 for crystal ball gazing—some of my micro-predictions on companies were wrong too.

This was a year that contained some salutary lessons now just for me, but for all forecasters. Perhaps the most revealing was the way in which the bear case for equities was reinvented during the latter stages of the year. To the extent that Western markets did wobble and lose their self-confidence, this was not prompted by the usual and most predicted set of circumstances.

In recent times, bear markets have generally been caused by the resurgence of inflationary pressures, sharp increases in interest rates and a consequent reduction in liquidity as economies slow and recession begins to grip. Moreover, the collapse tends to start on Wall Street and then spread to the rest of the world.

What happened in October, when Wall Street looked as if it was going to crash, was the very reverse. The crisis began not in the US but the Far East and then spread from these comparatively small economies to the world's largest stock markets. The fear that gripped markets was not that of

inflation leading to higher interest rates, but of deflation.

It was said that recession in the Far East would force the region to chase the only growth market left—the US—which would become flooded with cheap imports made cheaper still by competitive devaluation. This in turn might cause an investment famine in the US, consumer confidence would collapse, and it would be like the 1930s all over again.

So here was another curious about-turn in perceptions. The world was suffering, it began to be said, not from the traditional bughouse so much cited by politicians of under-investment, but from over-investment. Rapid growth in the Far East had led to uneconomic investment and a surplus in worldwide industrial capacity. Markets might therefore begin to behave like the Nikkei since the collapse of the 1980s property and stock market bubble. Policy-makers would find themselves trapped in a deflationary vortex.

For the time being, that fear seems to have receded, though there are still plenty of pundits around prepared to preach the theory. One such this week was George Soros, the international speculator and philanthropist who, as his wont, proposed a number of largely unrealistic policy options to counter the supposed threat of worldwide deflation.

When markets are in such buoyant mood, however, every cloud has its silver lining. Such is the unrelenting optimism of Wall Street and the American psyche that many in the US have already come to see the Asian crisis as positively a good thing, at least in terms of its effects on the US. Trouble in the Far East will put a much-needed deflationary break on runaway US growth, dampen domestic wage pressure, and therefore reduce the need for any interest rate hike this year, it is being said.

With one leap we are thus back to the idea that bear markets are caused by inflationary pressures. If the effect of turmoil in the Far East is to keep these pressures in abeyance, then what's happened is not bad news for Wall Street at all. Rather, it might allow the longest running bull market in US history to continue for another few years yet.

Believers in the New Age, a new economic paradigm that will allow non-inflationary growth in the US to continue into the indefinite future, still outnumber those who find this view incredible. Indeed, the new religion seems to find more converts everyday. Even Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, has watered down his view of a year ago that Wall Street stock prices were suffering from irrational exuberance. Furthermore, the sheer size of corporate activity said to be in the pipeline

—takeovers, mergers, share buybacks and other capital repayments—both in the US and Europe, gives a powerful upward momentum to markets.

Wall Street thus becomes harder to read than ever. Is it deflation or inflation that will bring this bull run to an end? Or are the two set to cancel each other out, allowing stocks and bonds to carry on upwards. I said last year that Wall Street was horribly overvalued and riding for a fall and I've no reason to change that view. Neither the New Ageists nor the believers in Worldwide Deflation seem to me to have the answers. Markets depend crucially, however, not on what is happening but on what people think might happen. Wall Street over the next year will be ruled by whichever school of thought gets the upper hand.

One important pointer to the future is perhaps the fact that nearly all of this year's rise on Wall Street took place in the first half of the year. Despite its gyrations, the Dow has in effect been running on the spot since August, apparently unable to make up its mind which way to go. In a sense, then, the bull market has already ended, though it hasn't yet given way to a bear market. This seems to me a quite sound view of what we might expect from stocks this year. Be wary of Wall Street, don't expect miracles from London, and steer well clear of the Far East and Japan.

Researchers solve the mystery of seasonal share price surges

The tendency for share prices to rise in December and January has long been a puzzle to economists. If stock markets are the efficient marketplaces that they are supposed to be, with a lot of well-informed traders able to respond instantly to new information, why should they have such a strong seasonal pattern, asks Diane Coyle?

At last a researcher has come up with an answer to this question that allows economists to cling to their view that stock market behaviour, as revealed by share prices, is always totally rational. It is that traders are reacting to underlying information that itself has a pronounced seasonal pattern.

In a paper in the recent edition of the *Economic Journal*, Richard Priestley from the Norwegian School of

Management confirms that the prices of UK shares usually rise in December, January and April, and by more than would be expected given the movements in the kind of economic statistics such as output, prices and the money supply that normally move the stock market. The US stock market, too, has a tendency to rise in January.

This was certainly true for the FTSE 100 index this December. It has climbed 304 points, or 6 per cent, in the last month. The Dow Jones Industrial index in the US had a weaker month, advancing by just over 1 per cent.

Figures for the rest of 1997 also broadly confirm with the pattern. January saw a 4.8 per cent rise, although this was outweighed by an 8.9 per cent surge in September on the back of increasing optimism Britain would enter the European single currency sooner rather than later, and a 6.6 per cent uplift in July. April saw a 2.9 per cent rise.

But author Richard Priestley finds that the seasonality in share price returns is caused by

the increased uncertainty about these statistics in the three months in question.

In December and January the extra uncertainty concerns the pattern of demand and production in the economy over Christmas and the new year sales period. Sales at this time can set the tone for the whole year and have unusually important implications for the level of business activity.

He writes: "Announcements of the level of economic activity... around this period provide important information regarding the performance of the economy and subsequent levels of activity in the coming year. This has general implications for the health of the economy and specifically for firms' cash flows."

Mr Priestley speculates that in April, unexpected tax changes could be the cause of the extra uncertainty.

Whatever the reason, the economics profession's "efficient markets hypothesis" appears safe. The higher the risk, the higher the return, just as the theory would predict.

World Cup boost for euro kick-off date

Optimism is growing that European monetary union will start on time a year from now, as Britain prepares for its first full week as president of the European Union.

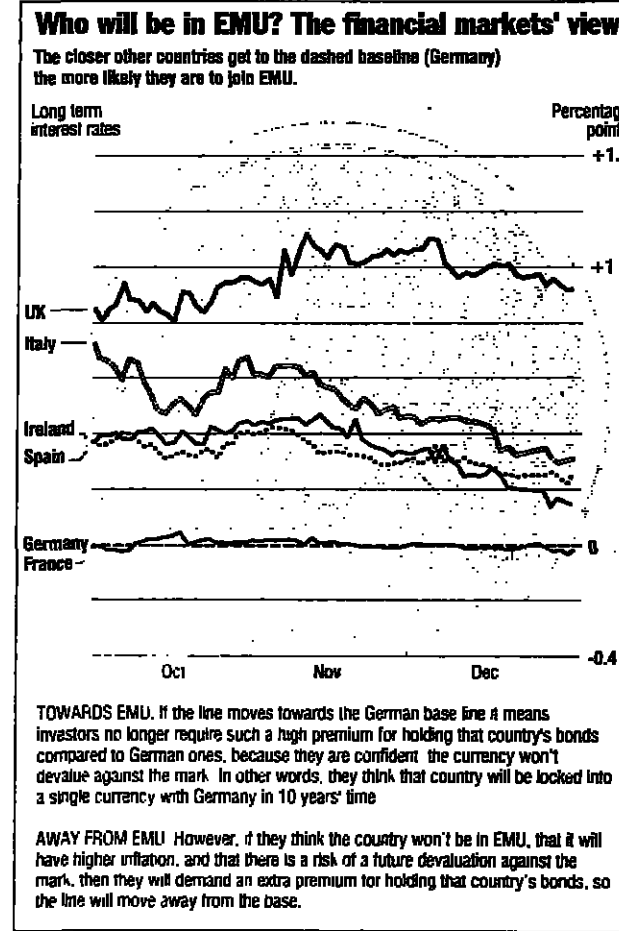
There are only five months to go until the crucial Council of Ministers meeting in May to decide which countries will take part in the launch of the single currency on January 1999.

Julian Jessop, an analyst at Nikko Europe, has raised his forecast of EMU starting on schedule to 85 per cent from 80 per cent in the light of the increasingly positive tone of the new year message of German politicians.

But Mr Jessop said he still retained a one-in-five chance of a delay or collapse of the whole programme as there was still the possibility of a hitch cropping up in the next 12 months.

Alison Cottrell, of Paine Webber, who rates the chances of a successful launch at 95 per cent, said it was too late, in both political and economic terms, for any of the leading European Union countries to throw a spanner in the works with just five months until the final decision.

One boost for the project



The brand new property boom that's gone sky-high

Their attractions include exposed beams, thatched roofs, reclaimed barn boards and baked clay tiles. No double glazing, though, and living tends to be open plan, but there are the communal gardens and - unless there is a squabble over vacant possession - the transaction is usually chain-free. Rosalind Russell takes a peek at bird houses.

Houses for birds, it seems, are every bit as des res as our own. And their potential owners are no less picky than people when it comes to finding exactly the right style, position and facilities.

House-hunting swifts, says the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, fly past a likely nest site brushing the entrance with their wings. Any incumbent responds by screaming vigorously and grappling with its feet until the intruder is ejected. Tits will happily nest next to robins or wrens, but not next to another pair of tits.

Problems with the neighbours are not confined to *homo sapiens*. As a result, the number and variety of design of bird houses to suit all tastes - avian and human - is remarkable. Whether your home is a Victorian villa or a period thatched cottage, you'll find an annex for your feathered lodgers that won't upset the planning officer.

The mail order company Presents Direct sells a bird house in kit form, consisting of real miniature bricks and roofing tiles made of baked clay, and with enough mortar to build it, for £24.95 (plus p&p). Just the job for a builder twiddling his thumbs with nothing to do after the New Year when the weather is atrocious.

The Shaker Shop (there are two stores in London and a mail order service) offers folk art bird houses and feeders, made by hand from old materials, including barn boards and tin, collected from farms in Pennsylvania.

The paint finish is aged to give the houses character, although it's unlikely even the most difficult to please bird is going to give a hoot. They are in limited editions and therefore not going cheap. The gazebo bird feeder is £149.95 and the turret house, with several front doors, is £149.95. A more modest little white house is £36.95 and there is a matching restaurant, for days when they just have to eat out, at £29.95.

The RSPB has several pages of houses and feeders in its current catalogue. A plastic, thatch-like cottage bird feeder is the most popular, costing £24.99, but there are nest boxes to suit almost everybody, including house martins.

Designed especially for them, and costing £15.99, the house martin nest has to be installed permanently under the eaves of a house (preferably painted white or cream, they are quite particular about

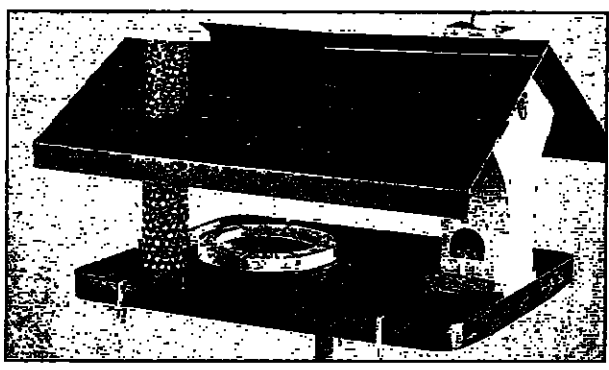
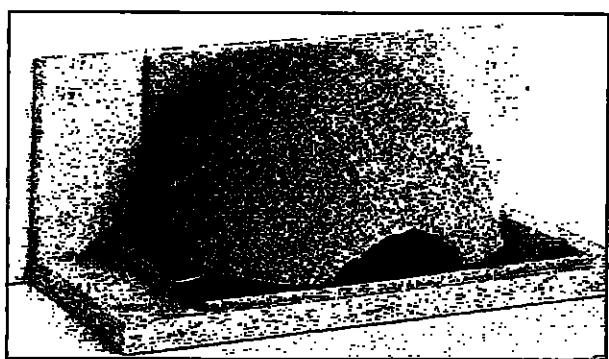


If you're planning on feathering your own nest this year, why not invest in a scaled-down second property...

Main picture: Lighthouse bird box from The Maritime Company, £14.95

Above right: House martin nest from the RSPB catalogue, £15.99

Below right: Bird lodge from the RSPB catalogue, £29.99



architectural finishes). The idea is to encourage other pairs to build their own nearby, but house martins are as fussy about their wattle and daub as English Heritage. Any old mud will not do. And, as each nest needs a thousand beakfuls of the stuff, a ready supply must be within 200 metres.

CJ Wildbird Foods near Shrewsbury sell a mud pack for martins, consisting of a green tray, a bottle of blue dye and 3kg of mud (£7.99). All you have to do is keep it wet. The dye is added to the mud to make it easier to spot the new building site.

Forsham Cottage Arks in Ashford Kent make bird houses to suit everything from two turtle doves to six geese a-laying. Some, including the Tenderden which has four floors, housing 20 pairs of birds, come into the stately home class of property. Not for the suburban garden, they point out, possibly unnecessarily, as it costs £1,411, delivered but not erected.

Slightly cheaper is the thatched Lamberhurst, £987.60 in white, £897.60 in brown. These cotes are sent to a master thatcher to be thatched. Even an Oriental garden can be accommodated: the Willow, painted red, green or blue, has a pagoda-style roof and costs £728.90 including delivery (less if you collect it yourself).

For tins bringing up their families by the seaside, the red, blue and white painted beacon house from the Maritime Company is one of the most charming B&Bs. The solid wood, 12-inch high bird box, in the shape of a lighthouse costs £14.95, plus p&p.

For the RSPB gift brochure call 01283 506100 (for leaflets on different nest boxes, 01767 680551); Presents Direct, 0171-371 7017; Shaker 25 Harcourt Street, London W1H 1DT, 0171-724 7672, and at 322 Kings Road, SW3 5DU; CJ Wildbird Foods 01743 709545; Forsham Cottage Arks 01233 820229; Maritime Company 01993 770450.

THREE TO VIEW/UNDER £160,000



The White House in Alrewas, five miles from Lichfield in Staffordshire, is a Grade II thatched house with beamed ceilings and an inglenook fireplace. There is one bedroom on the ground floor and two more rooms on the first floor, although, says the agent, they have restricted headroom so would be more suitable as guest rooms, or study. There's an overgrown cottage garden and a detached garage. £120,000 through Bill Tandy (01543 419400).



Oak Cottage in West Wellow, Hampshire is a listed thatched cottage near the New Forest. Dating from the 18th century, it was extended and renovated in the 1980s. The 19ft sitting room has French doors to the terrace and a door to the dining room. There are two bedrooms, a bathroom with roll top bath and a double garage. The secluded 88ft rear garden includes a vegetable garden and shed. £155,000 through James Harris (01794 511911)



The Black Bull is currently a pub in Newchurch, overlooking Romney Marsh in Kent, but planning consent has been submitted for change of use to a house. It presently has bar space of 34ft by 26ft, plus a barrel store, a 15ft kitchen and five bedrooms. Old black metal ducks' nest grates, panelled doors and exposed floorboards remain. The quarter-acre gardens are partly walled. Offers of around £155,000 to Phillips & Stubbs (01797 22338).

Sensible advice for vendors: slow down, you move too fast



PENNY JACKSON

While you are making New Year resolutions, sorting out your accommodation needs over the coming 12 months makes eminent sense. Penny Jackson offers a few tips of her own.

If neighbours' all-night parties over the holiday have proved the final push towards a move, then there is not much point in hanging about. To be somewhere new by this time next year, is as good a resolution as any. As more housing stock comes on to the market, buyers are no longer going to be rushed for fear of finding themselves without a home of their own when the music stops.

As is clear from the last quarter of the year prices, in London certainly, had slowed and over-valued houses were being reduced. All the more reason to choose a selling agent carefully. Those who come up with optimistically high figures should be asked how many houses or flats they have sold in the area at that price and to produce the evidence.

Pretend to be a buyer and find out whether the story is the same from the other side of the fence. Invite a few local

agents to view your home so you can make comparisons, not just on the matters of commission and marketing, but to see whether they have a feel for the strengths of the property. Remember, if they don't impress you, they are not likely to impress buyers either.

If you have confidence in your home and you want to save some 2 per cent of the sale price, why not try selling it privately. Estate agents will point out the pitfalls, such as you will not get as much since you may be ignorant of the demand, the problems with buyers reneging on agreements and so on.

But plenty of people have a go. Quite a number fall back on agents in desperation but those who have advertised effectively, weeded out the no-hopers, built up a good rapport with the buyer and seen the sale through smoothly wouldn't do it any other way. Once you have decided to

put your home on the market, take a critical look at it and list the things that make it look weary and down at heel. Clean windows, a fresh coat of neutral coloured paint and a smartening up of any front garden (much neglected in agents' views) all help with first impressions. A small investment of time and money can pay much larger dividends.

This is a good time to take stock of your home loan, whether you are moving or staying put. Anyone sitting on a mortgage with a standard variable rate without penalties attached should look at the fixed rate market since there are still some excellent offers around - mainly because this market has not reacted to recent variable rate increases.

Ian Darby of John Charcol, the UK's largest mortgage broker, sees the supply of mortgage money continuing to outstrip demand in 1998, which is good for home-

owners. But beware of redemption penalties. If a discounted rate for two years is followed by three locked into a variable rate, you could end up regretting it. And anyone with spare cash should consider paying off all or part of a loan.

As we enter the most expensive quarter for fuel bills, this is the moment to track down the source of those draughts. If you have insulated your roof, lagged the pipes, draught-proofed the windows and doors and still the bills are huge it may be a simple matter of getting your boiler serviced and learning about the heating controls.

Apparently the extremes of temperature that many homes lurch between are not only costly, but will not prevent burst pipes if the heating happens to be off during an icy spell. And if anyone with an old house is thinking of having secondary glazing installed, the payback period on heating bills could take anything from 20 to 60

years, according to English Heritage. Only 20 per cent of heat is lost through windows and sash windows can be effectively draught-proofed and still look good.

Could this be the year not to move, but to improve and stay put? Since clearly far fewer numbers of people have the appetite for unnecessary moves they must have been carving the space from somewhere. Roof space is an obvious winner, and a good loft conversion can double the living area.

Specialist companies, well recommended, are cheaper than employing your own architect, structural engineer and builder. Even if planning permission is not necessary, an application under building regulations must be lodged with the local authority. An unauthorised cowboy job is not only dangerous, but can cause enormous trouble when the house eventually comes to be sold.

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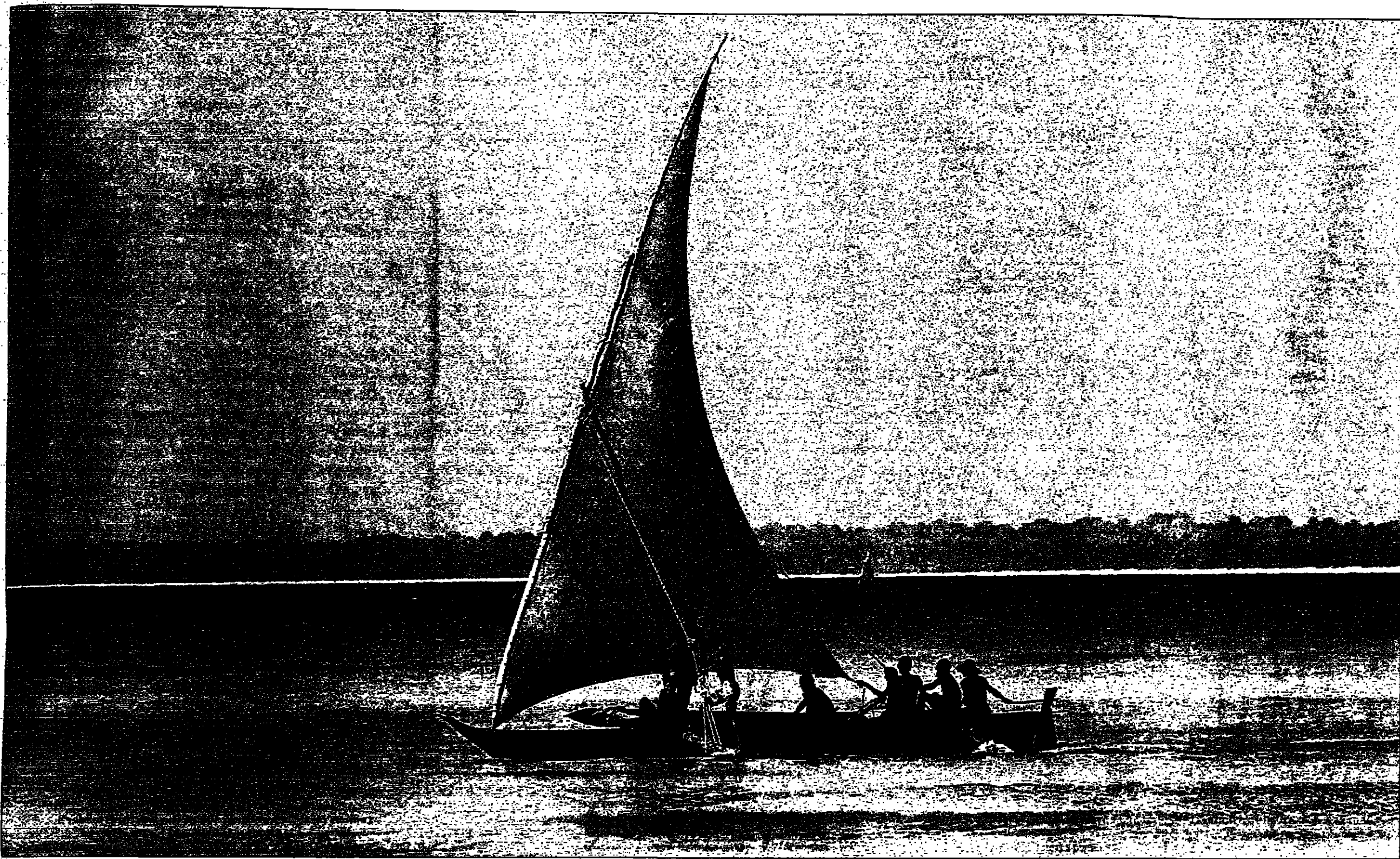
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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 3 January 1998



January sail: reef fishing from a dhow in Zanzibar's crystal waters

Photograph: Penny Tweedie/Colorofid

The life of spice

Few names conjure up such romance and mystery as that of Zanzibar, off the east coast of Africa. But, as Richard Holledge discovered, much of the appeal lies in its picturesque shabbiness.

On the island of Changuu, 20 minutes by motor boat from Zanzibar, three or four hours by dhow, a sign sweetly declaims the pleasures of the place, warns the visitor against destroying the coral reef and ends with this familiar admonition:

"Take only pictures.
Leave only footprints in the sand."
The message takes on a degree of urgency as Zanzibar transforms itself into yet another holiday spot blessed with the essentials for the Western traveller: a beach lined with palm trees, warm sea, hot sun. On Changuu the giant tortoises ignore the camera-clicking holiday-makers. Mostly Italian - Zanzibar is virtually an Italian colony - the tourists have been whisked from their beach hotel to pose with the one-metre-high creatures, admire the delicate white of the frangipani contrasting vividly with the red of the aptly named flamboyant tree, and sip a Serengeti lager. They won't be eating the rather dry fish and rice in the austere little bar, because lunch back at the hotel will be an altogether smarter affair.

Above all, they have come to sunbathe on the scrap of white beach, splash around a little, snorkel a bit and then move on. As their boat patters back to the mainland the tide sweeps in, the beach is covered, the footprints are washed away.

What is it about Zanzibar? What makes it seem so exotic to people who haven't been there, and hardly know where it is? Why does it seem so much more mysterious and beguiling than the Seychelles or Mauritius?

Well, it could be the name: all those sensual zzzzs, the fact that it used to be a centre for the spice trade, making it redolent of merchant adventurers, swaggering traders, Omani pirates.

The reality is more mundane but every bit as enticing. The heart of the capital is Stone Town. There are no souks selling gewgaws to eager tourists, no magnificent buildings - even their Catholic cathedral is a dour affair - and the Portuguese fort, built in 1700, is rundown and shabby.

But there is a warren of scruffy streets, and tall buildings with massive, ornate doors and plaster falling off walls, poky shops, and kiosks selling cigarettes, fizzy drinks, washing-up powder, tins of meat. There is a constant clatter of furniture being made and "genuine" African artefacts being conjured up. There's a fish market, and spectacular smells.

You will get lost in the maze of streets - even after a week of walking, and of avoiding the cyclists on their Chinese-issue bikes. And just as you reckon you know where you are, as you set off on an evening stroll, the lights go out. Apparently, a water shortage on the mainland, from where the power is pumped, means that electricity has to be rationed. So for two hours every evening, the sturdy beam of a hurricane lamp is all you have. Unless, of course, you are in one of the smarter hotels that have a generator.

Not that the small hotels are anything but charming. I stayed in the annexe to

the quite-famous Emerson House Hotel. Like many of the other older hotels the rooms have high ceilings, wooden panelling and burnished stairways.

From the vantage point of its rooftop verandah I could gaze over tin roofs decorated in various shades of rust red, and across to the port on one side, the Indian Ocean on the other.

The verandah became my headquarters. In the morning, breakfast appeared by magic: my very own concierge (I was the only person staying in the place) raced up the five flights to the balcony to lay out sweet cake, a triangle of puffy bread, jam, pineapple, melon and a little red skinned banana. In the evening I'd sit listening to the chorus of the muezzin, one after the other enticing the faithful to prayer. On one side, dhows nudged slowly along, their progress shaken by the wash from the hydrofoil from mainland Dar es Salaam; on the other side, the red sun dipped into the sea. Then the warning sound of the generator, the lighting of the storm lamp and the already mysterious streets become suffused with only the ghostly grey light of the full moon.

And though the editor of the *Lone Planet* suggests that the place be turned into a World Heritage site, presumably so that it can be pointed up and prettied up, he makes even more attractive to tourists, he misses the point. The appeal of the place is in its very scruffiness. There are a few smart hotels in Stone Town - the Aga Khan has just opened one - and there are beach resort hotels burgeoning along the east coast catering mainly to the package holiday friends from Italy, but the joy of the place is to be found in the cafes where tiger prawns, calamari and king fish are staples, and along the front beside the rather grandly named - and extremely down-at-heel - Floating Restaurant. Here a riot of stalls selling elongated carvings of African tribesmen, animals, drums, assegais - all those things you instantly regret buying the

moment you get home - vie with burning braziers of fish and kebabs.

There is a constant gentle barrage of "jambo", "How are you?", "What do you want?" There is nothing of the sense of threat which is chronicled in the *Lone Planet*, about the danger of mugging.

What you have to remember is that this is the Third World - maybe even poorer than that - and the tourist is subjected to a steady, though invariably polite, barrage of requests for trade.

Everyone is trying to sell you a trip here, a cruise there. Hardly any of them have the wherewithal to take you on any of these outings. They are merely freelance entrepreneurs after a small backhand for effecting the introduction to the travel agent, who may indeed own a jeep or be able to get you on to a boat. The nearest you get to a mugging is over the change. You hand over 1,000 shillings for something that costs 900, and you know that, after a lengthy rummage through pockets, drawers, the till, and a check with friends, there will be a regretful shrug. No change. So that's another 10p lost.

You get a real sense of the place in Jaws Corner, a crossroads in the middle of Stone Town where politicians, real and armchair, sit for hours, chat, talk and pontificate. On the walls are slogans which signal their permanent opposition to many things, but above all union with the mainland: "Open your eyes and look within. Are you satisfied with the life you are living?" NO.

For Nasser (whom I met on a beach on the west coast, hilariously littered with the hulks of East German warships), most of the ills of the island were down to the depredations of the mainland. He railed at "f---ing politicians" and was desperate for independence (it was then that it dawned on me that Tanzania was an elision of Zanzibar and the former British colony Tanganyika). In fact, so zealous of their "independence" are the people of Zanzibar that you will need to show your passport

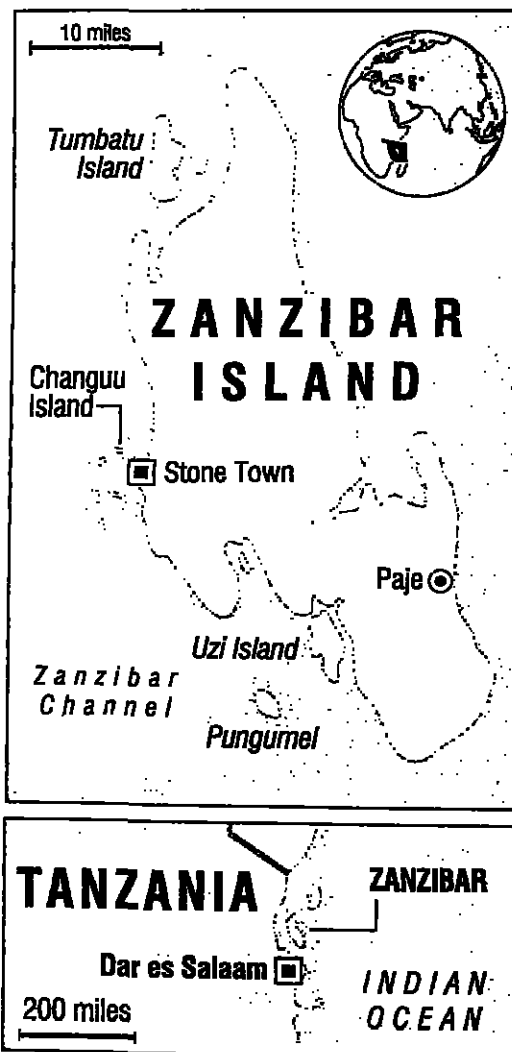
Continued next page

ZOOMING TO ZANZIBAR

Getting there: Gulf Air flies from Heathrow to Zanzibar via Muscat or Abu Dhabi; in January, Flightbookers (0171-757 3000) is offering a fare of £511 return. Or travel to Dar-Es-Salaam with Alliance Air (0181-944 5012) from Heathrow (£507) or British Airways (0345 222111) from Gatwick.

From Dar, most frequent flights are with Precision Air (about £30 for the 20-minute hop). The trip is cheaper by sea, by motorised dhow (very slow), ferry or hydrofoil. A third alternative is to find a cheap charter from Manchester or Gatwick to Mombasa, and connect there with a Kenya Airways flight (around £80 return); this may involve buying a Kenyan visa for £35.

Red tape: British passport holders require visas, which must be obtained in advance from the Tanzanian High Commission, 43 Hertford Street, London W1Y 8DB (0171-499 8951). Send an SAE for the application form, complete and return with £38 and two photographs.



INSIDE

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Nissan's road-going rocket/11

SPORT

CUP FOOTBALL

Chelsea's last line of defence/22

CUP RUGBY

London Welsh back in big time/19

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LOOK BEFORE YOU BOOK

Zanzibar: the life of spice

From previous page and yellow fever certificate at the airport. You are even charged \$4 to leave the island.

Fred, on the other hand, genial co-owner of Tropical Tours and Safaris, with his strikingly beautiful sister Freda, simply shrugged off the talk of independence.

"We voted against it. What difference can it make, anyway? Do we want our own army?"

Fred is typical of the entrepreneurs who realise that somewhere between the bland gorgeousness of a beach resort hotel and the faintly irritating chorus of "jumbo, jumbo", there is an ever-growing trade in tourism.

After the revolution of 1964, which saw the end of British rule, everyone was entitled to three acres of land. Fred has his bid for his allocation: he plans to develop it into a house and then apply for a plot in the forest. Meanwhile he is organising spice tours - a quick whizz around the farms which produce the cloves on which so much of the economy is based - taking people to the south coast to swim with the dolphins (they move so fast to get out of the way, that if you blink you miss them, but the lunch is good), and generally seizing on any opportunity he can see to make a quick Tanzanian shilling.

Which is how I came to be in Paradise Beach Bungalows in Paje, a straggly little collection of thatched houses on the east coast. I could have taken a bus, a *dala-dala*, a vehicle with wooden fretwork sides. It would have cost next to nothing and taken three hours. Fred took half that time. And cost a lot, lot more.

The beach here virtually runs the length of the island. It is a beach out of your fantasies. Palm trees nod gently as the tide tears in and out, the women are up at dawn with the low tide as it breaks a quarter of a mile out, to plant seaweed. The mix of noise is enchanting: the roar of the waves, the clatter of the palms in the wind, the voices of the women chatting and giggling, their skirts hoicked above their knees. Fishermen walk along the beach with their catch in a carrier bag, pausing to beat an octopus into tasty submission. The inevitable cyclist uses the beach as the main road - it is certainly much flatter and smoother than the bumpy, sandy lane inland.

The bungalows are simple. The lighting comes from the now familiar storm lamp: the little restaurant serves tender octopus, big, tasty prawns. All washed down with a bottle of Sprite. Nothing happens. Yours for \$16 a night.

It's Fred who fixes me up on a dhow cruise, a long, slow tack across to the islands off the town in a fabulously dilapidated boat, filled with irrelevant spars of wood, blessed with a spindly mast, a tattered sail and a steady leak. There's a crew of six who alternate between frantic activity to change the sail and catch the breeze and distinct torpor as we wander across the ocean. I'd still be there now if the skipper hadn't decided, as the moon came out over Zanzibar, to use the outboard motor and get us back to port. Just in time for the lights to go out.

48 hours in the life of Seville

You need a break - and a short cut to the soul of a city. Each week, 'The Independent' offers a prescription for the perfect short break. This weekend, Seville, with Simon Calder.

Why go now?
Because Seville's seductively ruffled layers of history and culture are revealed most vividly when the winter "chill" (average temperature 14°C) freezes out most tourists. Because you need to size up the city in relative serenity before returning for six days of madness during the spring Feria. And because if there is a more handsome city in Europe, I have yet to find it.

Beam down
The only airline with direct scheduled flights from the UK to Seville is Iberia (0171-830 0011), with a daily non-stop from Heathrow for a lowest fare of £182.90 (including all taxes). The same airline flies from Manchester, with a quick connection in Barcelona.

It may well be cheaper to find a cheap flight to Madrid, eg from Luton on Debonair (0500 146200) or from various UK airports via Amsterdam on KLM (through Air Tickets Direct, 0990 320321) for around £150. In Madrid, you connect with the AVE high-speed train to Seville, taking two hours from the Spanish capital to Santa Justa station.

Get your bearings
From the airport, a taxi covering the six miles to the centre will cost around 1,000 ptas (about £8). The airport bus operates from 6am to 10pm, mostly every half-hour, though with a long gap for a siesta between 2pm and 5pm. The ride costs 750 ptas (£3). Stay on to the end, right outside the Alfonso XIII hotel.

Rail travellers have it easy: from Santa Justa station, you can walk west to the city proper in about 10 minutes.

The city proper is defined as the ragged diamond enclosed to the west by the Guadalquivir river, and to the east by a meandering ring road. Inside this square-ish mile is the greatest concentration of elegance anywhere in Spain. Across the river, to the north west, stands the debris from Expo 92: to the south west, the down-at-heel quarter of Triana.

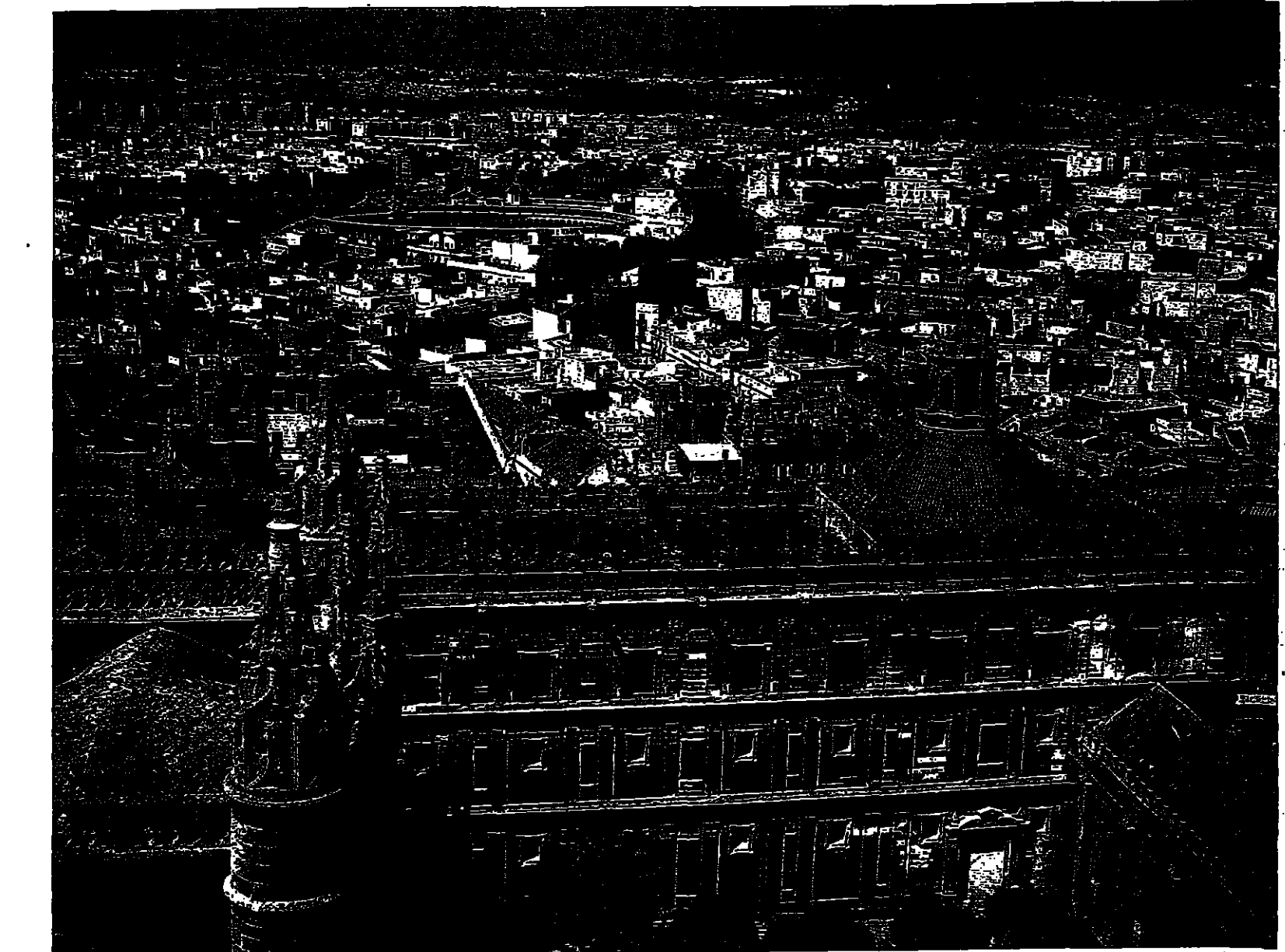
The tourist office on Avenida de la Constitución is the prettiest in Spain. It also rates among the most useless, in terms of providing such basic information as a map of the city and the opening hours of that rather large building up the road, the Cathedral. But if you want to try your luck, the office opens daily, 9am-7pm, except Sundays (10am-4pm).

Watch out for...
The habit of most maps to have the north point at the left, rather than the top.

Pickpockets and bag snatchers who are as ruthlessly efficient as those anywhere in the world, from Bogotá to Brazzaville.

Check in
To impress someone - even if only yourself - there is only one place in town: the extraordinarily civilised Casas de la Judería (literally: houses of the Jewish quarter), buried in the Callejon de Dos Hermanas in the Santa Cruz district, 500 metres more or less due east of the Cathedral. Rooms are scattered around a large, airy courtyard in a part of town where even the screeching mopeds fall silent. A single costs £30, a double £50, with optional breakfast an additional £4.50 per person. Book in advance on 00 345 441 5150, and be prepared to get cross as you try to track it down.

Among the many options several degrees cheaper and less cheerful is the two-



Seville: handsome on high (above), streets sizzling with life (below)

Photographs: Christopher Rennie and Robert Frerck/Robert Harding Picture Library

star Hostal Alameda, on the Alameda de Hercules just north of the city centre.

I stayed at the extraordinary new Alcora, which cost £50 for a single for a night. This buys a spacious, split-level room with plenty of room to write these words - though rather too good a view of the biggest supermarket in Christendom. What you gain in space, you lose in accessibility; an hourly minibus shuttle connects it with the real Seville.

Take a ride
Circular bus C2 runs anticlockwise right around this extraordinary city. Like all the public buses in Seville, it costs 120 ptas, or about half as much if you buy a wad of 10 tickets from a street-side machine. It will take you through and around the ghostly site of the old Expo, which resembles a forgotten circus from the 21st century - full of futuristically obsolete cable cars and space rockets going nowhere.

Take a hike
The cathedral, being the third largest in the world - after St Peter's in Rome and St Paul's in London, is a morning's exercise in its own right. While you're waiting for it to open at 11am, lose yourself in the surrounding streets: chords of Cartagena and Havana keep resounding. When you want to return to the cathedral, it takes no time at all to locate its vast bulk.

Inside the south door, an elaborate tomb contains the remains of the Genoan who changed the world: Christopher Columbus, who used Seville as a base camp for his voyages to the New World. The bones of poor old Columbus did

almost as much travelling in death as in life, shuttling between the New and Old Worlds before finally and fittingly coming to rest in Seville, which fancies itself as the original Latin American city.

Lunch on the run
The best fast snack in town - chocolate y chorros (spirals of deep-fried batter, ready for dunking in absurdly thick and sweet molten chocolate) - can be found at El Duque, directly opposite Marks & Spencer on Plaza de la Victoria. But it doesn't open at weekends.

On Saturdays, therefore, content yourself with grazing in the Barrio de Santa Cruz, east of the Cathedral, where street life sizzles even in midwinter.

Cultural afternoon
Granada owes much of its magnificence to its mountainous location; Seville just subsides beside a slouchy old river. But it is stashed full of miraculously atmospheric patios, palaces and plazas. A life-time would be a more realistic time-frame than an afternoon, but if you have to choose one sight then make it the Alcazar - the huge palace adjacent to the Cathedral. Seville specialises in scale.

Window shopping
It would be heinous to waste time on shopping, but if you want to see what's cool then walk along Calle Sierpes, keeping an eye open for some of the elegant, tiled murals.

An aperitif
Alfonso XIII may have suffered ill-luck commensurate with his suffix (a bomb at his wedding in 1906 killed 24 people; governments changed on average every 10 months during his reign), but sipping an iced sherry at the implausibly decorative hotel that bears his name is fortune indeed.

Next stop on the pre-dinner crawl could be El Rinconillo, bodged into an uncomfortable corner of Calle Gerona - all tiles, ancient wooden chests and racks of dangling hams. But you pay for the ambience, £4 for a beer and a nibble.

On the Alameda de Hercules, Las Columnas does the same thing for half the price, self-service, and provides the chance to sit outside. Choose your dinner venue from one of the many options on this cheery street - but don't start until 10pm.

Sunday morning: go to church
The Santa Maria monastery on Cartuja island was Columbus's spiritual home. It comprises a mystical series of interlocking courtyards and overlapping epochs: an original 12th-century church, of which dazzling fragments remain; a ceramics factory, during which it acquired the five-pack of cooling towers; and a repository for conservationists, a role only recently acquired.

A walk in the park
One of Alfonso's few successes was the great Iberoamericana exposition of 1929, staged in the fabulous Maria Luisa park. It is dotted with absurdly caricatured pavilions, but the main glory is the Plaza de España - a monumental hemisphere, decorated to the last exquisite touch by the provinces of Spain.



WEATHER

The British Isles, noon today



Most recent available figure at noon local time. C: cloudy; L: light; B: heavy; S: sun; W: wind; H: high; L: low; P: rain; F: fog; D: drizzle; N: snow; S: shower; B: breeze.

Aberdeen	1	6.43	Cardiff	1	9.43	Inverness	1	7.45	Osford	1	8.43
Aberystwyth	1	8.43	Cardiff	1	8.43	Isle of Wight	1	8.43	Plymouth	1	10.50
Ayr	1	7.45	Cork	1	7.45	Scarborough	1	8.41	Shrewsbury	1	7.45
Belfast	1	7.45	Derry	1	7.45	Southampton	1	7.45	Stirling	1	7.45
Birmingham	1	7.45	Edinburgh	1	7.45	Stranmillis	1	7.45	Swansea	1	7.45
Blackpool	1	7.45	Exeter	1	7.45	Torquay	1	7.45	Warrington	1	7.45
Bournemouth	1	7.45	Glasgow	1	7.45	Wrexham	1	7.45			
Brighton	1	7.45	Guernsey	1	7.45						
Bristol	1	7.45									

General summary and outlook

It will be a blustery, showery day with strong winds everywhere and gales in many parts. In fact, parts of Northern Ireland and western Scotland will turn stormy for a while. Heavy overnight rain will clear south-east England then all parts will have bright spells and occasional showers. They will be most frequent and heaviest in the north and west, with thunder and hail possible. In the east there will be more sunshine between the showers but even there some of the showers will be heavy.

More rain will move quickly north-eastwards across Scotland on Sunday. The wind will ease for a while but strengthen again as the rain passes through, with gales in exposed western areas. Monday will see a mixture of sunny spells and showers, with the showers turning increasingly wintry, and snow will accumulate over the higher ground. On Tuesday more rain will spread in from the south, preceded by snow over the mountains. Blustery showers will follow, with strong winds again.

Atlantic chart, noon today



World weather most recent available figure at noon local time

Athens	1	13.55	Florence	1	10.50	New York	1	6.45
Auckland	1	22.72	Frankfurt	1	9.46	Nice	1	12.54
B. Aires	1	20.68	Geneva	1	10.50	Paris	1	15.59
Bangkok	1	30.86	Glasgow	1	16.81	Rome	1	9.48
Barcelona	1	12.58	Hamburg	1	12.72	St. Petersburg	1	1.34
Bombay	1	15.59	Hong Kong	1	22.72	Taipei	1	1.34
Buenos Aires	1	14.57	Isle of Wight	1	8.41	Tokyo	1	1.34
Calcutta	1	8.43	Jerusalem	1	9.48	Toronto	1	17.53
Cairo	1	8.43	London	1	15.59	Winnipeg	1	10.50
Cape Town	1	16.81	Los Angeles	1	22.72	Yokohama	1	1.34
Chennai	1	16.81	Madrid	1	15.59			
Columbus	1	17.53	Manila	1	14.57			
Copenhagen	1	24.75	Moscow	1	16.81			
Dallas	1	5.41	Mumbai	1	20.68			
Dhaka	1	14.57	Newcastle	1	15.59			
Dublin	1	22.72	Osford	1	8.41			
			Perth	1	17.53			
			Stockholm	1	17.53			
			Wellington	1	17.53			
			Zurich	1	9.48			

AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Watford Way, Mill Hill Circus and Fiveways Corner. Carriageway reduced to two lanes for long term roadworks. Until 31st May 1998.

London, A2011 Barking Underpass. Carriageway until April 15.

Bucks, M40 J13-14. Long-term roadworks and contraflow.

Kent, M20 J5-7. Bridge maintenance and restrictions. Until March 9th.

Bristol, M5 J18-19. Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays. Until 1st January 1999.

West Yorkshire, M1 J43-J42 Stourton to Lofthouse (M62). Contraflow and speed limit are in place. Until Jan 21 1998.

Greater Manchester, A56, Old Trafford. Roadworks. Until 19th January 1998.

Bristol, M5 J18-19. Contraflow in operation across the Avonmouth Bridge with a 50mph speed limit. Regular rush-hour delays. Until 1st January 1999.

Somerset, M5 J22-23 Highbridge to Bridgwater. Major roadworks due to bridge repairs. A 3 mile contraflow is in place. Until 31st March 1998.

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The sky at night



The radiant of the Quadrantids meteor shower, which peaks tonight, lies in Bootes, near to Hercules, Draco and the tail of the Great Bear. This chart is for 1.00 am.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

London, A1 between Watford Way, Mill Hill Circus and Fiveways Corner. Carriageway reduced to two lanes for long term roadworks. Until 31st May 1998.

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Less than a month after the Geminids, another of the three best meteor showers of the year is underway, due to peak tonight. Astronomers have a perverse way of clinging on to outdated terminology, and this shower retains its old name - the Quadrantids - derived from the former constellation Quadrans Muralis (the "Mural Quadrant" - an obsolete instrument for measuring the positions of stars and planets), which was introduced into star charts in 1795 and abolished when the International Astronomical Union adopted the present 88 constellations in 1930. The radiant of this shower actually lies in Bootes. Though the Quadrantids radiant is circumpolar (ie never sets) for UK observers, it only gains respectable height above the horizon in the early hours of the morning at present. Nevertheless, with such a prolific shower, there is a chance of seeing meteors emanating roughly from a northerly direction at any time tonight and over the next two or three days.

Jacqueline Mitton

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Stairways to heaven

A new television series investigates the inspirational nature of rock climbing on obscure and difficult mountains around the world. But, writes Charles Arthur, commercial pressure from trekkers and even helicopter-carried picknickers are wrecking the romance of these wildernesses.

The sandstone spires of the Wadi Rum, in the Jordanian desert, have long fascinated the Bedouin tribes who live there. In past centuries, they climbed them in bare feet trying to catch the ibex mountain goats which loped sure-footedly about the craggy rocks soaring up to 2,000ft above the ochre sands.

Nowadays, the Bedouins' reason for loping up the grey rock is a more commercial one: working as guides for the growing number of foreign rock climbers who now visit the area, in search of adventure. It's a cut above the standard package holiday spent by the poolside or gazing at inhospitable territory from behind the windows of an air-conditioned bus.

Rock climbing is a comparatively new activity in Jordan: the first European climbers there came in 1952. "I was a keen climber from the village of Greenfield near Oldham, was first inspired to look more closely at the possibilities of the rock formations by their use as the backdrop to David Lean's film *Lawrence of Arabia*. In the manner of the true obsessive, Ward sought Lawrence's book *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* for any mention of rock suitable for climbing. He then began asking the Jordanian government for permission to travel there and climb. In 1984 his persistence paid off, when he was invited to visit. Since then he's been a regular.

And for anyone who thought that such "adventure tourism" as rock climbing would only be the preserve of the young, fit and strong, *The Face*, a six-part TV series which started last night on BBC2, shows Ward and his partner Di Taylor - "both the wrong side of 50", as the producer Richard Else puts it - attempting a dangerous climb on the uncertain rock of the Wadi Rum. They survive, despite a moment 800ft up when Ward, leading, finds himself stuck on a blank face with no obvious way up or down. The relief and inner satisfaction they felt on reaching the top, just as the evening sunset turned the desert floor into a blue carpet, isn't the sort of thing you can capture on film, notes Else.

His aim in making the series was partly to show how climbing is not just the preserve of suicidal *supermen* who are born without a fearful bone in their body. That's not to say, though, that they haven't lived a little. Besides Ward and Taylor, the series' participants include Andy Parkin, who ruptured his spleen and dislodged his heart in a near-fatal climbing accident in the 1980s, and Joe Simpson, whose book *Touching The Void* is a vivid, terrifying account of how he crawled off a South American mountain alone, after being lost and left for dead with a smashed ankle.

Non-climbers who have seen *The Face* say it opens their eyes - "though I don't think it sends them down to their local climbing shop. But at the end they re-

alise it's not about being mad, or getting to the summit, or getting killed. They realise it's inspirational. They feel it's a real adventure."

But Else also wanted to show off the idea of climbing's world spread. These days it truly is a recreation you can pursue anywhere there's vertical rock: have rope, will travel. The locations for the climbs range from Canada's frozen northwest to Vietnam, to Scotland, South Africa and, of course, Jordan.

You might notice a certain mountain area missing from the list of locations. "We purposely didn't go to the Himalayas," says Else. "Enormous damage is being done there. The budget could have covered it, and actually it was more expensive to go to Canada. But it was a deliberate choice." The "damage" Else and many others are seeing in the Himalayas is wrought not only by climbers, but also by commercial trekking expeditions that treat the mountains and surrounding environment essentially as a disposable resource which can be abused at will. Rubbish and human detritus is piling up. Nor is that limited to the Himalayas. On reaching the top of one remote summit in Jordan, Ward and Taylor found graffiti carved and painted onto the rocks, and litter thrown down cracks in the rock. The rubbish had come from visiting picknickers, not climbers, who had arrived by helicopter.

"Is nowhere sacred?" asked Ward, rhetorically. These days, the answer tends to be no, not if there's money to be made taking people there. It is increasingly difficult to find real wilderness, though climbers tend to discover it more easily. "The higher you get, the less you see," says Else. "But in Jordan, for example, there's an awful Jordanian flag painted on the summit of the Wadi Rum. Then there are the names and graffiti carved into the rock - English names, Scottish names." Other disfigurements include arrows painted onto the rocks by guides from nearby cities, rather than the local Bedouin, to show tourists the way up the traditional climbs.

Ward and Else are wounded by such indifference to the environment - so much so that they have petitioned the King of Jordan to make the area of the Wadi Rum into a national park whose wildlife, vegetation and local people would be protected. "People come up from big cities like Aqaba and Amman and drive all over the desert, destroying the ecologically fragile surface and vegetation," Ward says. "Quite recently trees have been chopped down to make barbecues and picnics."

The desert ecology can't survive such an assault. Else comments: "It's important that the Bedouin should have their own economy, but it should be handled in a way that leaves the environment undamaged." The Bedouin at least trust Ward to put their case: they have nominated him as their spokesman. But does he think the park will be created? "Some people in the country have suddenly realised that Wadi Rum is a big money-earner, so it's difficult to say. At the moment, it's in the lap of the gods."

"The Face" is on BBC2 on Friday evenings at 7.30pm. *"The Face: Six Great Climbing Adventures"*, a book to accompany the series, goes on sale from Thursday, priced £18.99 from BBC Books.



Face to face: Di Taylor tackles the Haj on Jordan's Wadi Rum

Photograph from the BBC book *The Face* accompanying the series

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5/WINTER HOT-SPOTS

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 3 JANUARY 1997
■ 5



SIMON CALDER

Tony, Cherie, the three kids and the mother-in-law spent £16,000 flying Pearl Class to the Seychelles. But New Brits buy their winter sun much more wisely than the Blair family.

Pearl Class? Pah. While the Prime Minister insists on travelling on holiday in the rarefied *elitism* of Air Seychelles' business cabin, his people are perfectly content with Britain's charter airlines. I shall avoid any allusion to pearls preceding swine, too, since standards on package holiday flights are excellent – everyone gets a good deal. The only differential among us New Brits returning from New Year in The Gambia was how painfully slowly our luggage would appear.

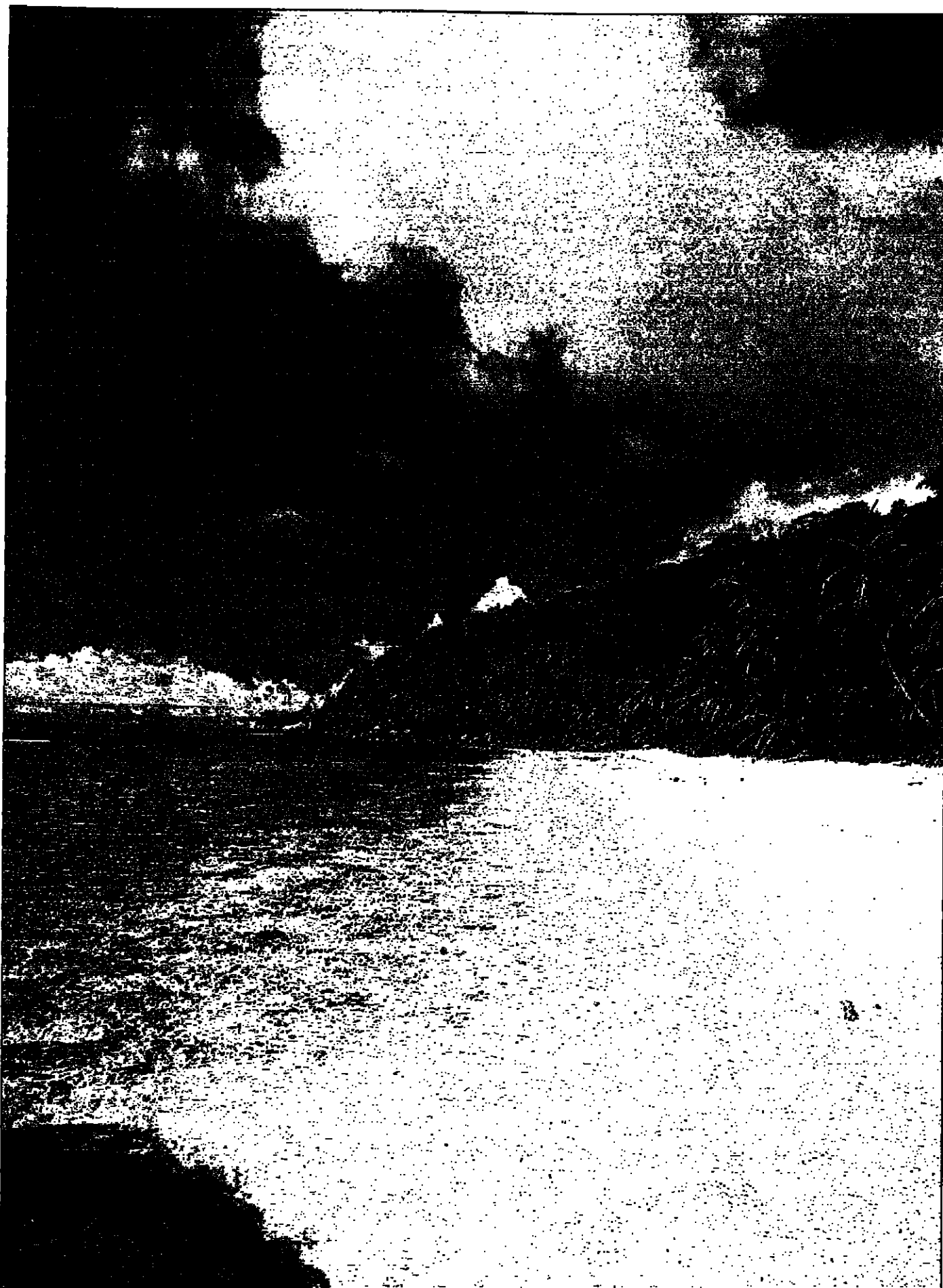
My suitcase finally crawled along the conveyor at Gatwick in the early hours of yesterday morning. But none of us really minded the usual old baggage of a delayed charter flight and surreal announcements about "operational difficulties", because we knew we were enjoying the extraordinary bargain that is the British winter sun holiday.

Look at the picture of the Seychelles on the right. The Gambia in January is like that, only without the cloudy bits. "Mid-winter" in West Africa's smallest state wafts over you so sensuously that you feel barely tickled by a deliciously warm, dry 25C (compare that with the sweaty Seychelles, now in the middle of the rainy season).

Perhaps because of its greater appeal, the Gambian beach is considerably more crowded, with bathers greeted by a genial jostle of bantering locals – for whom we represent a significant marketing opportunity. After a day or two they get to know you and your habits (a freshly squeezed orange juice now, a fistful of straight-from-the-tree bananas later) and drift off to tackle the fresh consignment of tourists from Copenhagen, still jet-lagged after the long haul from the near-Arctic to the Tropics.

It would never do, of course, to ask what the Scandinavians paid for their package holidays, but you can bet a papaya to a peanut that it was a darn sight more than the £425 quoted in the First Choice brochure for an eight-night holiday, with flights, bed, breakfast and a couple of parties – Christmas and New Year – thrown in. Most New Brits paid rather less than that: my travel agent offered me a 10 per cent discount, which even with a questionably priced and compulsory insurance deal attached brought the cost down to the £400 mark. And, inevitably, the chap sitting next to me on the flight out had held out until the last minute and paid 50 quid less. Jolly good luck to him, too, since late-bookers comprise an essential component of an industry that seeks to maximise value by making the most of resources.

A bit like the government, then. Next year's winter sun brochures are already on the shelves. With a bit of careful planning the Blair clan, plus the entire cabinet (and assorted wayward offspring in need of gentle rehabilitation), can spend a Christmas vacation in the Tropics and still have change out of £16,000. Diving for pearls or jiving for joy – Club Tropicana has it all.



Going where the sun shines brightly: the Seychelles

Photograph: Robert Harding Picture Library

The place where I stayed wasn't actually called Club Tropicana. It was the two-star Badala Park Hotel, planted a respectful distance from its four-star brethren on the beach. The accommodation was winningly wonky in the manner of many student flats – doors that didn't quite agree with frames, craftsmen that didn't quite agree with each other about the best way to stop the bathroom door handle falling off with every clasp. Only the churlish would complain, though, because like most things in The Gambia the place muddles along in an often distracted but always jolly manner.

Improvisational verve means that exactly the same fabric is used for bedroom curtains, tablecloths and, honestly, bedsheets. While you admire such Fawlty-esque touches, remember that you are paying just £50 a night for pride of place in the January sun. Included in this figure is 5,000 miles of air travel, enlivened by very decent meals (possibly up to Pearl Class standards, Tony) and in-flight entertainment. Transfers to and from the airport are covered, together with the services of a resilient rep who doesn't flinch when the thousandth new arrival asks about malaria while munching through mince pies and sherry at the welcome meeting.

By your third hearty breakfast you are yearning for rather more exotic fare (and you suddenly notice, with a wince, that *that* fabric lines the breadbasket, too). Real African life is a 12 pence communal taxi ride away in Serekunda, Gambia's largest town, where the heat rises and the hustle falls. Wintertime, and the living is easy. Your £400 holiday even includes a £20 donation to that nice Gordon Brown in the form of Air Passenger Duty.

Sterling is so strong, and Britain's travel industry so efficient, that even the Chancellor's recent doubling of the UK's exit tax has failed to halt our winter migration. The really clever folk, though, are hovering like the vultures that circled above the cliffs on New Year's Day: the bargains begin this week, and reward anyone willing and able to travel before half-term in February. You can find some ideas in today's *Independent Saturday Magazine*, or just enter the price war fray now raging in the High Street. Late yesterday afternoon Britain's biggest travel agency Lunn Poly (0990 811111) offered me a week on Mexico's Pacific Coast, departing 13 January, for £380. Winter is such a pearl of a buyer's market that the world truly is your, er, oyster.

new trees with the help local volunteers and around 500 schoolchildren.

Such greenery obviously provides valuable habitats for local wildlife. It's not exactly a safari, but Andrew Patterson, project director at Watling Chase, points out that increasing native trees within their forest is attracting crested newts, skylarks and stag beetles – all species that have recently been showing a worrying decline.

For information about a community forest near you, contact your local tourist office.

Sue Wheat

to urban life, a walk in the woods need not entail a Brysonesque expedition.

Combining woods, farmland, villages, leisure enterprises, nature areas and public open space, the forests serve as "green lungs" for urban areas as well as much-appreciated bolt-holes for stressed-out city folk. With many miles of new or restored pathways and cycleways within the forests, there is also plenty of opportunity to get back to nature and get rid of Christmas flab.

Those who fancy being active in a different way can get involved in tree-planting schemes. Watling Chase community forest, in the London borough of Barnet, has recently planted 6,000

Healthbook, which is published this week by the travellers' club Wexas, price £9.99.

The other editor, Sarah Thorowgood, tells of sunburn after an overnight drive to the Algarve: "I promptly fell asleep on the then already warm sand until about four in the afternoon... Quite apart from feeling that I could probably radiate enough heat for an entire Mediterranean holiday season, it became quite exceptionally difficult and

painful to sit down. Then the blisters came, followed by great lumps of skin that fell off my back for the next two weeks."

Fortunately, the book contains remedies for these and many other complaints.

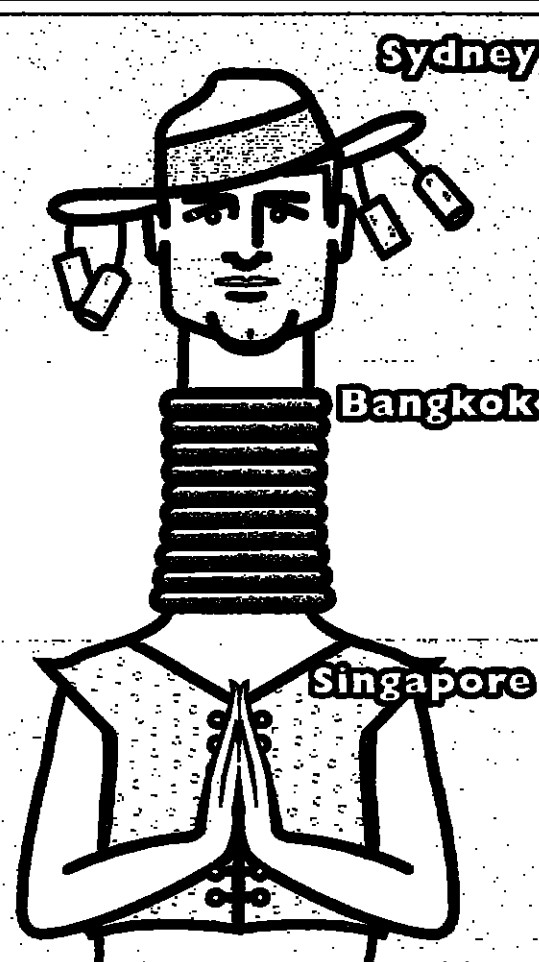
Wexas is at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>. You can access the latest Foreign Office advice to a range of countries on <http://www.fco.gov.uk/>

LOW ROAD

Since the handover of Hong Kong last June, airlines flying between the UK and its former colony have found it difficult to fill seats. Now British Airways is trying to shift some capacity by offering an Air Miles bargain. Instead of 9,900 miles, in February and March it will "cost" only 2,900 miles to travel London-Hong Kong and back. Bearing in mind that the lowest easily available air fare costs about £400, this values each Air Mile at around 14 pence. Call 0990 511 806 for more details.

HIGH ROAD

You can also redeem Air Miles for Club, First and Concorde travel – for double, triple and quadruple miles respectively. The Concorde flight to New York "costs" 27,200 miles return – valuing each Air Mile at around 21 pence, if you calculate from the normal return fare of £5,994.

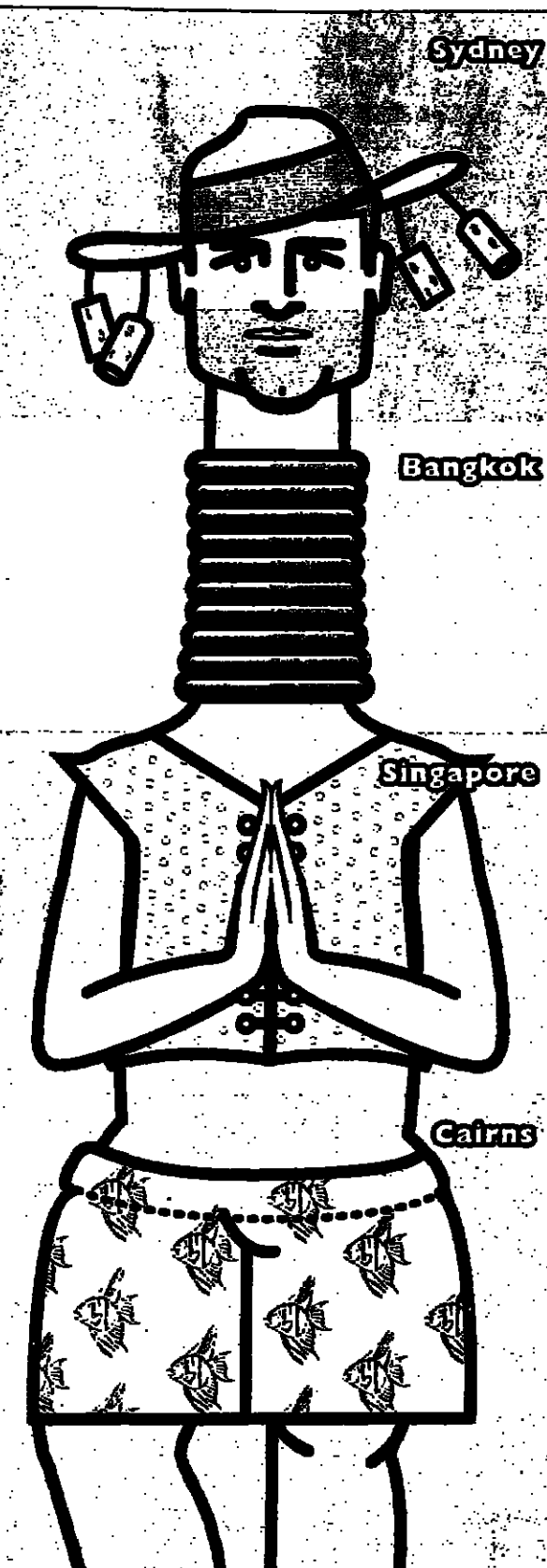


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GREEN CHANNEL

Having eaten too much, drunk too much, and become a lounge lizard over the festive season, what most of us need is a long country walk. The problem is, the British – and in particular the English – tend to live in towns. Fortunately, there is a community forest within three miles of nearly 24 million people in England; a dozen community forests now cover an area more than 12 times that of the Isle of Wight.

The Countryside Commission and Forestry Commission are developing community forests as part of a plan to create opportunities for millions of people to enjoy wooded countryside around towns and cities. For those condemned

RED CHANNEL

"Each time I go abroad to Nepal, Vietnam, India, even Thailand or Colombia, I get sick. Diarrhoea, heat stroke and general malaise strike ruthlessly, despite the care I take over water, food, sleep and sun. On one occasion I ended up in an Indian hospital, on an intravenous drip, for three days."

That is no ordinary traveller's story. It is an account by Miranda Haines, one editor of *The Traveller's*

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6/SKIING



Park City, above and right, is a town under siege by movie people

Photographs: Skishoot-Offshoot

A paradise of premières, powder and poseurs

What's the answer, if you want to spend part of your skiing holiday ogling Hollywood stars and seeing the latest films? Tamsin Murray-Leach glides into the winter wonderland that is Park City, Utah.

For two weeks each January, a strange tribe descends on this peaceful ski town. Skidding and shivering down pretty, snow-packed streets in the *de rigueur* black designer uniform of New York and Hollywood, surrounded by seven of the best ski mountains in the US, visitors to Robert Redford's Sundance Film Festival eschew the slopes in favour of days and nights in darkened rooms; Park City during Sundance must be the only ski town in the world where queues outside the cinemas are greater than those for the chairlifts.

Which is what makes late January the perfect time to ski or snowboard in Utah, especially for those who'd like to add a bit of spice to their skiing holidays. Instead of, say, rounding off the day with an outdoor Jacuzzi and a hearty meal, a trip to the Sundance Festival means rounding it off with an outdoor Jacuzzi, a hearty meal and one of the premiere independent movies yet to hit the big screen. From 15 to 25 January 1998, the 14th annual Sundance Festival will screen 67 shorts and 103 feature films, 61 of which will be world premières. It certainly makes a pleasant change from the usual PG drive-in offer in ski resorts.

And going to Sundance is also the perfect ploy to get Non-Skiing Partner to agree to a ski trip. Just picture the proposal, usually so fraught with potential confrontation and failure:

"But darling, we're not exactly going skiing. We're attending one of the major motion picture festivals in the world."

Pause.

"Yes, you probably will get a glimpse of Robert Redford/Cameron Diaz."

Pause. Smile. Flurry of pre-trip shopping for warm, yet sexy, evening wear.

These days of movie mayhem are not for the faint-hearted, however. Since Robert Redford founded the festival 14 years ago, with the aim of developing "independent voices and visions in the arts", it has grown to become a focal point of the American film industry, attracting filmmakers, actors, agents, buyers and film company executives in their thousands (12,000 is the official figure). Park City passes saturation point; it is a town held under siege by movie people. Restaurant booths are requisitioned by equipment-toting film crews seeking interviews with other film crews; the library and conference centres are converted into cinemas; and larger hotel lobbies and function rooms are transformed by night parties into meeting-places for Those Who Are and Those Who Would Be Famous.

Yet none of this need prevent you having a ski holiday of your dreams, providing you have a good sense of humour and like a few challenges. Sure, condos and hotels are booked months, if not years, in advance; parking is a joke; and getting a table in a good restaurant becomes a tactical exercise. But don't you see - it's all part of the game. Rule number one: where there are crowds, there are cancellations. And movie people like to stick together, so Park City is full of tiny inns and glorified B&Bs with festival, when it is wise to try to book evening shows and predictably popular premières. Once at Sundance, simply show up an hour before daytime screenings and get in the queue; the earlier the show, the more likely you are to get a ticket.

Just bear in mind that there are glorious mountains beckoning when the Festival starts to seem a bit too much like hard work, and they are practically empty because all the accommodation below is packed with 12,000 film folk. The resort at Park City is the largest in the state, and site of the 2002 Winter Olympics, with everything from long, gently rolling beginner runs to acres of open bowls and glades, prime powder terrain. Yet although there is plenty here to keep even the most experienced skier happy, six other mountains lie within easy reach. Snowboarders should pop over to Brighton, Solitude or Snowbird, famous for back-country terrain and the pros who choose to make their homes here. Traditionalists will revel in Alta, a smaller, steeper resort with lots

of powder, cheaper lift tickets and a strict no-snowboarders policy. This ruling is upheld in old-school Deer Valley, just up the road from Park City, while a few miles in the opposite direction at The Canyons, a newly restructured resort, they attempt to keep poor, discriminated-against snowboarders happy with a machine-groomed half-pipe and a variety of obstacles to hop over and leap off.

Then, of course, there's the snow itself. Car licence plates in these parts proudly proclaim: "Ski Utah - The Greatest Snow on Earth!" This is not a shallow boast. Everything you hear about the legendary Utah powder is true. It is dry and light as a feather. Slicing through a Utah powder field really is like floating on air - a cliché, but no other comparison will do. Even the intermediate skier will find Utah powder manageable, while for experts and snowboarders it is practically nirvana, a legal high inexplicable to the uninitiated, a truly spirit-soaring experience. Partake in Sundance by all means: watch some great films, soak up the glamour, chuckle at the spectacle. Just don't forget the reason you came: the mountains here are better than anything conjured up on the silver screen.

How to get to Sundance, and where to stay when you are there

Tamsin Murray-Leach flew to New York on British Airways for £225 return, and bought her round trip ticket from New York to Salt Lake City on American Airlines for \$364 (£220). She stayed at Patricia's Country Manor Bed and Breakfast in the neighbouring village of Kamas for \$85 (£51)



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The long and winding railroad

The usual train from London to Manchester takes two-and-a-half hours to cover 184 dull miles. But Simon Calder tracked down a new, wayward addition to the schedules, which adds 150 'free' miles plus eight or so hours, as it meanders around some of the loveliest scenery of England and Wales.

Poetry in motion. The stations chime by as the 3.13pm clatters along from Clapham to Cwmbran, Warminster to Loominster, Pontypool and Pres to Pwllheli. And only a poet could have conceived so eccentric a ride as the Waterloo to Manchester "express". In a fit of poetic genius, Wales & West has devised the most wayward train in Britain. Hitherto there have been several ways of getting from the capital to Manchester, but until this winter none of them has involved travelling via Wales, or combined the cathedral cities of Salisbury and Hereford in a single, impetuous journey.

Here's the plan. The train sets off from Waterloo on a south-westerly trajectory, ie away from Manchester. The two meandering carriages pause at Britain's busiest station, Clapham Junction, before setting off for a tour of the Ws: Wimbledon, Woking, Warminster, Westbury. They even manage to pass through two stations called Whitchurch, separated by 150 rail miles.

That's the great thing about the new service: its mere existence means that a blatantly unreasonable route has officially just become "reasonable". And because of a riddle in railway rules, standard ticket holders can take as long as they wish, changing trains at will, and don't even have to catch the 3.13 train once. So you can devise a wonderfully rambling day-trip, like this one.

Oh, and you don't even have to begin at Waterloo. As far as your ticket is concerned, London is an amorphous mass. I could have begun at Charing Cross, Blackfriars or London Bridge, but I chose to begin at Victoria. At 5.33am the train sets off, gathering speed past the brutally illuminated Battersea power station. I am heading due south. To Manchester.

The train, though, says "Brighton", so I abandon the garish Commex South Central yellow as planned at Clapham Junction, and switch to the Basingstoke express.

I'd never thought much of Basingstoke before, but that's because I had never found myself with an hour to spare at the buffet on the platform. A wide spectrum of human life calls in on its way to work: stern-faced commuters, spilling coffee as they

dash for the London train, railway workers heading in the opposite direction none too hurriedly, and someone in the corner whose final destination is Manchester.

Choreographing this maelstrom is Peggy, who knows her customers as well as she knows her Brunch Muffin (a delicious compilation of cheese, sausage, bacon, tomato and egg stuffed within a single bun; with coffee and flapjack, a bargain at £2.99). As the 7.15 to Waterloo approaches, the radio scornfully plays the Kinks' "Waterloo Sunset".

I am in paradise. Dawn is well into its stride by the time Salisbury drifts into the frame. Should you follow in my tracks, be advised that, in midwinter, 8am is the ideal time to witness the mists around the cathedral softly melting; and be warned that the through train demonstrates a philistine tendency by failing to stop here. Choose one which does. Alight in the half-light, and you can brush against English history, past the remains of the County Gaol and a hopelessly half-timbered Odeon cinema, to the most beautiful Gothic structure in the country, standing proud of the meadows that lap around her fine skirts. Check your progress on the oldest functioning clock in the world, conveniently attached to the north transept.

Despite having ticked more than 500 million times in the past 600 years, it seems to keep rather better time than the average

Wales & West train. None was on time; most were delayed by 10 minutes or so, which ordinarily would be neither here nor there. But if you are trying to get here, there and everywhere and still reach Manchester in time for tea, any delay is a nuisance.

You soon cheer up, though. Five minutes out of Salisbury, the train is carving through countryside of broad downs, with kindly churches keeping watch over timid hamlets. The people who've just got on at Westbury don't seem to appreciate this performance, you muse, as the train meets up with the Avon, and floats gently downstream with it.

The ticket inspectors are uniformly a cheery bunch, and unperturbed by someone who appears to be five miles short of a cheap day return (railway parlance for a none-too-bright passenger) by insisting on travelling the long way round to Manchester. "Cor blimey, mate, good luck", was the only comment my ticket provoked.

You could subtitle this journey "England and Wales through grimy windows": rail privatisation has not improved cleanliness. But Bath still looks magnificent through the murk as you are around the city, and Brunel's Temple Meads station at Bristol is as palatial as Bristol Parkway is brutal.

The Severn Tunnel is here and gone in a flash. Miraculously, a rainbow appears as you emerge into Wales. Another marvel:

a refreshment trolley turns up, the first train catering for five hours. A tea costs 95p, but by now you would probably pay a fiver.

Newport begins ugly, as only down-at-heel British towns can. There is no way of getting from the station to the centre without clambering over fierce railings or descending to a tangle of Faustian underpasses. This is car country, or, more specifically, truck territory. When the 40-ton fraternity decides to take over the planet, Newport will be their High Command. But when you clear the hurdles it turns out to be an intriguing town. The museum charts the Chartist, original social democrats whose struggle has interesting present-day parallels. Then down Commercial Road, which becomes progressively less well-named as you proceed south.

The saving grace is the 1906 Transporter Bridge, an enormous steel frame over the Usk river. Cables support a gondola, which carries six cars plus miscellaneous pedestrians and cyclists across the muddy water-course every seven-and-a-half minutes - a piece of industrial archaeology that really does serve a modern-day purpose.

At last, you catch a train which is aiming broadly towards Manchester. As it hurtles north, the climate changes every mile through the spine-tingling landscapes of Chawin's On The Black Hill.

In Abergavenny, a huge bruiser of a cloud muscles over the horizon; by Hereford, the sun bestows a benevolent mid-winter sparkle upon the city. But you have to prioritise; no time to stop here, because my guidebook (a 1936 AA Road Book that I carry for its economical eloquence) promises that down the line lies "One of the most attractive English towns".

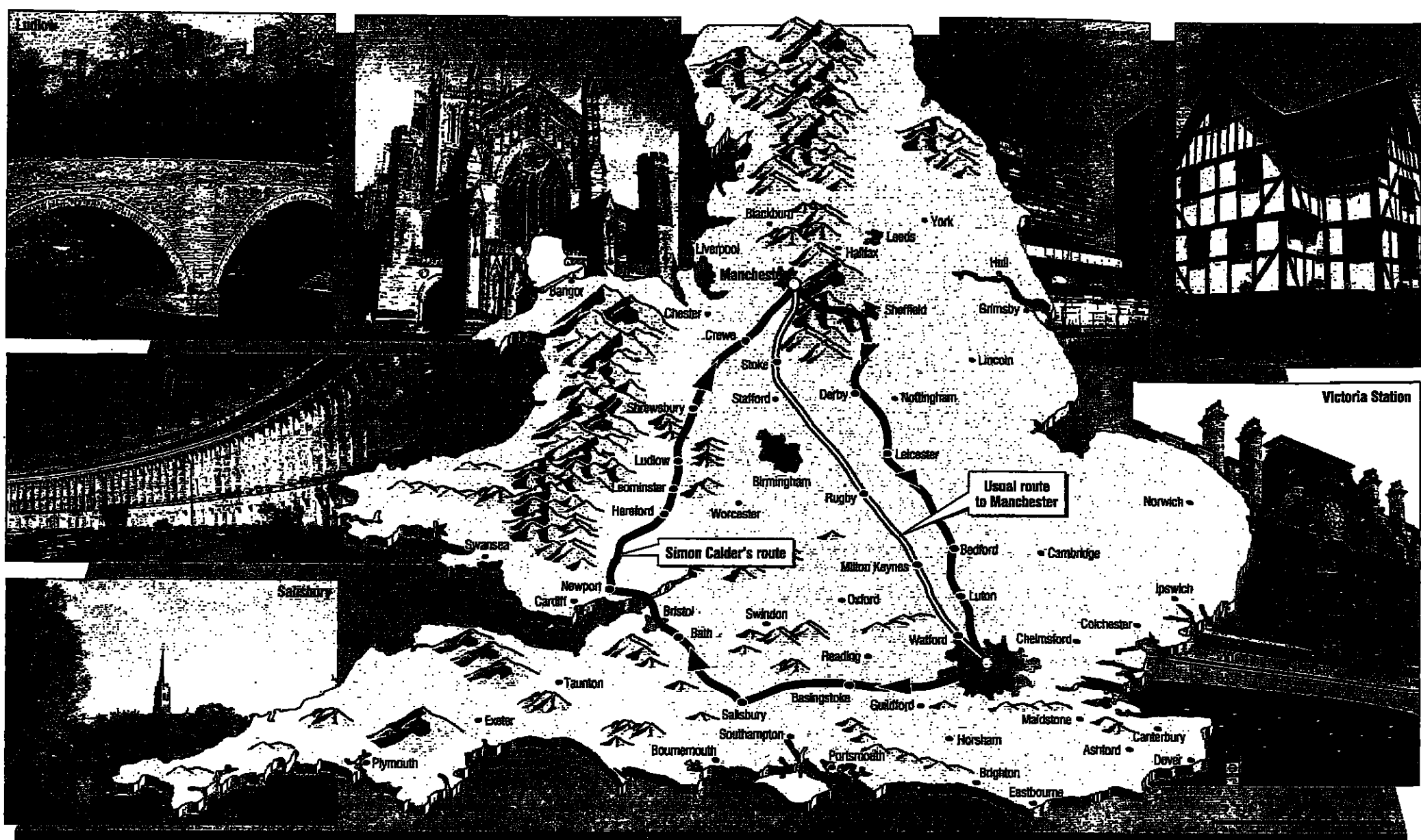
Understatement, indeed. After a couple of hours in Ludlow, I would fight its corner against Siena, Aix-en-Provence and Heidelberg. Wondrously preserved Elizabethan houses tumble down the hillside from a castle softened by the centuries to a perfect state of dereliction. The Wales & West scheduler was cruelly overlooked in the New Year's Honours; he or she deserves a CBE for introducing the British to their own country. People of Clapham Junction and Church Stretton, drinkers from Craven Arms and New Inn: you can board a train from your home and alight at what is genuinely one of the finest towns in Europe.

Winter is the ideal time to thread through the Borders. Denuded trees add a poignant fragility to the scene, heightened by forgotten, roofless relics lying abandoned in empty fields. "Little Switzerland" comes and goes on the left, the Long Mynd Hotel celebrating Victorian exuberance. The sky, meanwhile, tries hard to snow.

Soon Shrewsbury Abbey pops up on the right, triggering trepidation; what could follow the triumph of Ludlow? Not, I wagered, something called the Shrewsbury Quest, with its resonances of touristic tackiness. But it embraces the Abbey grounds sublimely, while tracing the place and its people persuasively. On a quiet afternoon like this, the man in charge of calligraphy has time to indulge the visitor by describing the extent of medieval monastery and the vandalism of Thomas Telford - then Shropshire's Surveyor - in driving the A5 straight through the middle. A lone pulpit stands solemnly between the road and the goods yard. Its stiff verticality is mimicked on the far side by a fine Victorian postbox, a ruddy hexagon topped off with splendidly unnecessary plumes.

By now it is (a) getting dark, (b) hammering down with a malevolent mix of hail and rain, (c) approaching Crewe ("A great town with a park, splendid public buildings and enormous engineering works", urges the guidebook). Oh, Mr Porter, what shall I do? Stay on board. Finally the little Wales & West wanderer slides into Piccadilly alongside the Virgin express from Euston. Big train, short trip. I had been going for 11 hours. Short train, big trip, great deal.

Next week: great little train trips. Part one of a series on Britain's unexpected railway journeys.



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CUTTINGS

Jean Hill, of Chittlehampton in north Devon, is worried about her panther lilies. "I sowed seeds of *Lilium pardalinum* in October 1986 in a 5-in pot and they grew well," she writes. "I left them *in situ* until 1990 when I planted them out, undisturbed, into our very fertile, acid Devon soil.

"In 1992 and 1993 they bloomed very well but, unsurprisingly, they were overcrowded, so in October I divided them. The bulbs were very big and I gave some to two friends and planted three groups of them in my own garden. We all three, living several miles apart, have had this same result.

"In 1994, they showed shoots, but only 2in high. Every year since they have showed shoots, this year reaching 6in, but nowhere near flowering size. I recently dug up one of my groups of bulbs, just as the foliage was changing colour. They were very healthy little bulbs and roots.

"My friends have one group in light woodland, the other in the vegetable garden. We are all very patient gardeners, but are now beginning to lose patience. Why have the bulbs stopped flowering?"

Lilium pardalinum, the panther lily, is a showy and generally easy American species that in the wild grows up to at least 5ft. The flowers curve back on themselves and are richly red and gold, with dark spots round the centre. Left to itself the plant makes a matted mass of rhizomatous roots, with little clusters of bulb-like scales providing the growing-points for the flowering stems. The mat is important, as it provides the reservoir of food and drink for the flowering stems above.

Since Mrs Hill and all her friends have suffered the same problem, I would guess that the disturbance caused by dividing the original clump is probably the cause of the lilies taking a step backwards. Perhaps too much of the rooty mat was lost in the division, so that the lilies need to build themselves up underground again before they have the strength to flower.

Our recent dry summers may be a problem, too. What *Lilium pardalinum* likes best is a soil that is well drained, but moist too, with plenty of leaf mould and humus to keep the root-run cool. It doesn't like wind and it doesn't like deep shade. The acid soil that Mrs Hill talks of should suit the plant well, provided it does not dry out. The bulbs are happiest with at least 5in of soil on top of them.

But at least they seem to be trying to recover lost ground. The growing shoots are getting bigger each year, rather than disappearing altogether. When they have built themselves up to their former strength I am sure they will come into bloom again. Meanwhile, Mrs Hill needs to keep them well watered.

The winter lecture series arranged by the University of Oxford's botanic garden starts this Thursday, when the garden designer Noel Kingsbury talks about the "new wave" of perennial planting (mass planting, German fashion, for anyone still riding the old wave). In this series, lecturers have been invited to explore "Passions and Prejudices". There will be plenty of both on 29 January, when Robin Lane Fox explains the way to "Better Gardening". Lectures start at 8pm in the Garden Quadrangle Auditorium, St John's College, Oxford. Tickets, £5 a lecture, from Louis Allen, at the Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AX (01865 276920).

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Sunflowers were the stars of a quick-fix garden that I planted last summer for a friend who had a six-month lease of a cottage, running from the beginning of April to the end of September.

The brief was simple. The garden had to be cheap. She wanted it to peak in August, when she would be spending most time at the place. She wanted it to retain the atmosphere of an old cottage garden, with a mixture of vegetables and flowers.

The patch was roughly 20ft square, bounded by gravel paths on two sides. Once it had grown cabbages, now it was completely bare. There was no outside tap, so watering would be a palaver, and anyway my friend would be using the place only at weekends, except for the August stint. So this had to be a garden that demanded little upkeep, where the plants would be left pretty much to find their own food and drink. The soil was light and fast-draining.

The first things to go in were standard gooseberries, four of them planted down a boundary alongside one of the paths. This ate up the lion's share of the £100 budget, but neither of us ever regretted the extravagance. The round, lollipop heads of the gooseberries, balanced on long, 4ft

stems, suited my friend's picture-book image of what an old-fashioned cottage garden should look like. I egged her on, because I love them too. They were planted as soon as she moved in, so from the beginning the patch looked less forlorn.

At the beginning of April, too, I started off the sunflowers, two seeds each in a series of 3-in pots. Watered well, then wrapped in cling film, the pots needed no attention until the seedlings poked through. Nonetheless, I thought I'd kept them on my windowsill at home until they were ready to plant out. You need to be around at the right time, to whip the cling film off the pots so that the seedlings can stand upright. You can sow them earlier than April, but I was thinking of the August deadline for the cottage. Sunflowers generally take four months from seed to the start of flowering. If we sowed too early, they would peak too early.

Sunflowers have become deeply fashionable, the bonus for gardeners being that there are now masses of different kinds to choose from. I used 'Moon-walker' (Thompson & Morgan, £1.79 for 40 seeds), a branching type about 4ft-5ft tall with pale yellow flowers. I also sowed 'Full Sun' (Suttons, 99p), a more traditional, golden yellow type, and 'Gold and Silver' (Mr Fothergill's, £1.25), which has yellow flowers above soft velvet leaves of a silvery-grey green.

Sunflower colours range upwards and downwards from the standard bright yellow, to include a pale ivory and a deep, rich mahogany. They've been planted in cottage gardens for so long that we think of them as being part of our culture, but, like most of our garden flowers, they are foreigners, brought over from America in the 16th century. English gardeners first learned about them in *Joyful News out of*

the Newe Founde Worlde, translated in 1577 by the super-optimist John Frampton.

"It casteth out the greatest flowers," he wrote, "and the moste particulars that ever hath been seen, for it is greater than a great Platter or Dish, the whiche hath divers colours... It sheweth marvellous faire in Gardines."

From the same part of the world, at about the same time, came the nasturtium, which I also started off in pots for my friend's cottage garden. I used two kinds, 'Jewel of Africa' (Thompson & Morgan, £1.19) which has long, trailing shoots of marbled foliage, and 'Empress of India' (Thompson & Morgan, £1.29), which is much bushier, with steely, blue-green leaves and deep, luscious red flowers. Nasturtiums are a gamble. Sometimes they get choked with blackfly. I've been lucky with them in my own garden over the last couple of years, and so was prepared to take the chance.

The plan was that the nasturtiums should cover the ground under the gooseberries, in a strip about 4ft wide. As an extra precaution, I pushed a few seeds direct into the ground there and put jam-jars over them, to protect them from voles.

In May there was another spurt of activity when we planted out two widely spaced, staggered rows of dahlia cuttings behind the gooseberries. The plan for the plot was very simple. Everything was planted in parallel rows, in the old-fashioned way. The dahlias were all red, yellow or bronze, 'Hamari Gold', 'Christopher Taylor', 'Alva's Doris', 'Jescol Julie' and the like. Some, such as 'Grenadier', had dark, purplish foliage. We also planted some slips of globe artichoke, which I'd detached from the sides of mature plants in another friend's garden.

These made a kind of informal hedge

on the side of the plot furthest from the gooseberries. The slips needed watering in well, but on that light soil they made fresh root very quickly. They were there for their looks rather than with any hope of a crop, but two of the plants got going quickly enough to produce heads later that summer. That was a bonus.

Meanwhile, I had also sown seed of tomatoes and courgettes, raising the plants, like the nasturtiums and sunflowers, in single, 3-in pots. By the end of May, both were big enough to set out in the patch. We planted four courgette plants in a line next to the dahlias, watered them in well and mulched them thickly with mushroom compost. They got no more water for the rest of the summer. I'd chosen the courgette 'Taxi' (Mr Fothergill, £1.55) for its bright yellow fruit, and the plants' wide-spreading leaves acted as an extra kind of mulch, stopping weeds from muscling in. An outdoor bush cucumber would have done much the same job, but without the glistening splashes of yellow.

In the same late-May session, we planted out the sunflowers and the tomatoes, setting them alternately in a single row in the space that was left between the courgettes and the artichokes. The tomatoes were tall, cordon ones, the sort you have to tie to a stake and nip the side shoots from. Bush tomatoes would have been more labour-saving, but there wasn't enough floor space for them in the patch. And I liked the idea of the tall, stout stems of the sunflowers broken up by tomatoes, hanging with bunches of red fruit. 'St Pierre' (Marshall's, £1.06) was the one I chose, because its flavour is so good.

By August, the gooseberries had cropped, one of the bushes producing huge, amber-coloured dessert gooseberries with insides like pudding wine.

Undiscovered by blackfly, the nasturtiums swirled outrageously around the gooseberry bushes' trunks, regularly attempting to take over the path, as well as their allotted strip. But you can easily pick up the shoots and lay them in the direction you want them to go.

The dahlias exploded, though the rain that helped the courgettes to produce a bumper crop snapped one or two of the stems of 'Hamari Gold'.

However, weeds never had a chance against the beefy foliage of the courgettes and the artichokes. Only around the stems of the sunflowers and the tomatoes did a little light hoeing have to be done now and again.

For a minimum outlay (without the gooseberries, you could have done the whole thing for £20), the plot gave a long and brilliant display, as well as providing at least £20-worth of vegetables. The vegetables were a particular source of pleasure to my friend, because she had never before grown anything she could eat, and hadn't realised it was so easy. Every tomato, every shining courgette was a miracle, as far as she was concerned.

Quick-fix gardens have to rely to a great extent on annuals. In this particular case I used nasturtiums and sunflowers because they bulk up more quickly than other flowers. In a smaller patch, a mixture of marigolds, poppies and eschscholzia might have been more in scale.

Get seeds from Thompson & Morgan, Poplar Lane, Ipswich, Suffolk IP8 3BU (01473 688821), Suttons, Hele Road, Torquay, Devon TQ2 7QJ (01803 614614), Mr Fothergill's Seeds, Kenford, Newmarket, Suffolk CB8 7QB (01638 552512), SE Marshall & Co, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire PE13 2RF (01945 466711).

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The mystery of the disappearing spring salmon

The salmon in our rivers are disappearing. Why? And what can be done about it?

If the owners of a great fishing river put out a *cri de coeur*, something must be seriously amiss – and so it is on the Tweed, which flows out to the east coast on the borders of Scotland and England. The spring run of salmon, once the river's glory, has dwindled almost to nothing, and nobody is sure why. The River Tweed Commission has launched a major conservation programme.

Not only fishermen stand to lose if the river runs down. A survey carried out by the Deloitte Touche consulting group in 1996 showed that fishing contributes £12.5m a year – more than 10 per cent of local tourist income – to the Border economy, and supports 500 full-time jobs.

Including all its tributary burns, the Tweed has nearly 2,000 miles of waterways. The natural fecundity of the system is not in doubt, as I saw when I went electro-fishing with Dr Ronald Campbell, chief biologist of the Tweed Foundation, which is charged with enhancing stocks of salmon and trout.

He was working that day in the Turford Burn, where the water was only about 6in deep, and so clear that every detail of the bottom was visible. The burn appeared to contain no life – until Dr Campbell switched on his ring anode. Then suddenly the water was alive with flashes of silver as trout fry and parr turned belly-up, temporarily stunned by the 200-volt current. Every one was netted and meticulously measured before being returned to the water; and from the morning's work we could compute that this single burn contained more than 400,000 infant fish.

The challenge is to ensure that the highest possible numbers of this huge stock survive to maturity and eventually, after going out to live at sea, return to the river to spawn. Already much has been done in the upper reaches of the system. Miles of new fences prevent sheep and cattle from eroding the land at the edges of burns, and the banks themselves have been extended into the stream, increasing the depth of water and speed of flow. Man-made obstacles have been removed, so that fish can move up to spawn, and artificial pools have been created.

Yet all this work seems to be having only a limited effect. The number of salmon taken on rod and line is generally between 9,000 and 10,000 a year, and the number netted in the estuary is between 8,000 and 9,000; but only a small proportion are caught before 1 June. Thirty years ago, spring rod catches were around 5,000 a year; now they are little more than a fifth of that.

Small wonder, then, that radical proposals have been made. From 1 February, netmen are asked to return, and tag, all salmon caught up to 1 June (they will be compensated by a reduction in the levy they pay). Anglers are being asked to return "a majority of fish caught up to the end of June".

"In general," says the recommendation, "there will be a presumption that the first fish taken will be returned (unless it is the angler's first-ever salmon)." The second fish may be kept, but the third should be put back, and so on – and all fish returned to the water should be tagged. "The first fish is the most important. It is putting this one back that will make the difference."

Further, there will be a ban on killing any fish found to be tagged already. "A tag in a fish should be regarded as its passport to the spawning grounds." The theory is that all concerned will be encouraged to play ball by the reassurance that if they return a fish to the river, it will not be killed by anyone else.

The Commissioners have also applied for a legal ban on worms and lures with multiple hooks on the lower reaches; and they are offering a reward of a side of smoked salmon, a sweatshirt or a collection of flies – to anyone who puts back a previously untagged fish.

Clearly the scheme will depend to a large extent on personal honesty. Judith Nicol, the lively director of the foundation, concedes that there may always be cheats; but, she says, "There's tremendous enthusiasm for the idea, because it involves everybody."

So far, so good. But what is happening out to sea? Nobody can answer that key question. The Commissioners are hoping to persuade the drift-netmen who operate in inshore waters to postpone operations until the beginning of June. Yet driftnet catches have also declined drastically, and global warming may be having a disastrous effect on salmon stocks in the Atlantic.

The theory – so far unproven – is that warm water has pushed up into the normally cold areas of ocean between Greenland and Iceland, where salmon go to feed; that higher temperatures are affecting their food, and that the fish are not attaining the size or strength they need to return to their native rivers and spawn. Smolts – second- and third-year salmon – are thought to be particularly at risk.

I, for one, would not want to fish if I could not keep what I caught; for me the whole point of the exercise is to bring home something delicious to eat. But evidently there is no longer room for such cavalier attitudes on the Tweed, or on many other British rivers.

صكرا من الامل

It really was the pits

A disused coal-mine in Leicestershire has been transformed into a science park to entertain the whole family. Louise Duffield made an extended pit stop.

When you struggle for almost an hour to prise your children away from the exhibits and into the car for the home journey, you know the attraction has hit the target. But when it takes almost as long to round up the adults, then it's scored a bull's-eye. That's what happened to us at Stribston Discovery Park in Coalville, Leicestershire, which is built on the site of the former Stribston Colliery. The hands-on Science Alive! gallery has experiments based on the weather, parts of the body, and energy. Where else could you get the chance to walk through a tornado, or watch how the joints of your legs move when you ride a bike? Then there's the engineering gallery, the transport gallery, the extractive industries gallery, the textiles and fashion gallery...

Until 6 November, the discovery park is hosting an exhibition celebrating 75 years of the BBC and 30 years of BBC local radio - giving visitors the chance to read the TV news and become a radio presenter.

Once outside the enormous

exhibitions hall, the learning through play theme is extended into the science play area. This is an educational play area at its best.

Add to this the wheelwright's workshop, the nature trail and the Century Theatre, and you have a recipe for sheer fun. Not to be missed is the tour of the colliery buildings, given by an ex-miner.

When George Stephenson, of railway fame, sunk his first mine-shaft at Stribston in 1832, he could have had little idea that mining would continue until 1986, when the site was imaginatively turned into Leicestershire's premier tourist attraction.

The visitors
Dianne Williams, a student teacher from Derby, went to Stribston Discovery Park with her sons, David, 11, and Robert, eight.

Dianne: I thought it was lovely because it was spacious and open-plan, and there was plenty of room to move around the exhibits.

In many ways it was better than the Science Museum in London, because it was not so busy, and it was small enough to do it all in one day. But there is plenty there for a full day out, and it seems excellent value. It also appeals to families. Small children can watch what's going on; older children will be inquisitive - why this, why that? - and secondary school children will understand. There are

one or two areas specifically for the under-fives, too, which is good.

I was impressed that not only did the instructions on the exhibits tell you what to do, but there were also signs that explained what was going on. And there were signs in braille.

To have ex-miners giving the colliery tour is a good idea. Anyone could have taken a party of people round and explained what was what, but he really brought it to life with his experiences.

David: I enjoyed the interactive science bits. I liked the solar-powered boats - you can control the dimness of the light, and that controls the speed of the boat. All the stuff there was puzzling.

I quite liked the bit where you can talk on the radio and go on the television. I was very interested in the colliery tour. The dynamite bit was good.

The shop had a good range of stuff. There were some interesting books there. I bought a 3-D model of the Periodic Table.

Robert: I have been before - about two years ago, with the school - so I knew it would be good. I liked the pretend radio with lots of buttons. There was also a lock thing, which I was experimenting with making three sets of water rise and fall. There was a hollow football with a ball in the middle with electrical lights coming off. If you put your hands on

it one of the beams comes to your hand.

I thought it was funny when the miner locked us in the elevator - it looked as if he was going to send us down, and I was kind of nervous in a way.

The deal

Stribston Discovery Park is in Ashby Road, Coalville, Leicestershire (01530 510851). Open every day except 25 and 26 December. November to March 10am to 5pm, April to October 10am to 6pm.

Admission: £4 adults, £2.75 children five to 15, under-fives free, £2.95 concessions, £10 family ticket (two adults and three children). Colliery tour: adults £1, children 50p. Education and group rates on request.

Access: disabled access throughout the exhibition hall and to most of the colliery tour. A variety of special needs is catered for.

Toilets and baby-change facilities: plenty of clean toilets. Baby-change facilities and toilets for the disabled.

Catering: a café/coffee shop, with a range of basic snacks, cakes, drinks etc. Indoor picnic area.

Shops: spacious and well-stocked, incorporating a bookshop. There is also a tourist information point.

Education: the park is tailor-made for school visits, of which Stribston has many, at all levels. It also hosts a variety of temporary exhibitions and events.



Mine host: Stribston Discover Centre

MOTORING

Thrash the latest Porsche? You can with a Nissan

If you thought all Nissans were boring, Roger Bell has news for you. The Skyline GT-R is a technical tour de force, and entertaining too.

There is something amiss here. Think Nissan and your mind should focus on sound, sensible, unimaginative family saloons, not beguiling soul-mates for speedy connoisseurs. So what's this? A maverick model that is getting rave reviews from enthusiasts of the specialist press, and can take on - and beat - Porsche's new 911? Surely not.

It's true. The Skyline GT-R is a formidable machine. Skylines in various shades and abilities have been around since the late Sixties, spearheading Nissan's competitive endeavours with more than 200 significant race victories. Hitherto, they have found their way to Britain only through the back door, as personal imports by well-heeled aficionados. However, the ninth iteration of the only Nissan to acquire legendary status is now a listed model - at £50,000. Import restrictions will limit the total sold in this country to 100. Fifty grand is a lot to pay for a Nissan, let alone

a car with an ugly visage and lines that hardly define grace or elegance. It's the bruising muscle beneath the skin of this two-door tearaway that explains the price, if not justifies it.

Power comes from a race-bred straight-six twin-cam engine, aided by two American turbochargers that boost output to 280 horsepower - more with electronic fiddling that might invalidate the normal three-year/60,000-mile warranty. A rear-biased four-wheel-drive transmission system, centred on a five-speed manual gearbox, allows the wheels with the most grip to get the

lion's share of the energy. Another novelty is that all four wheels are steered, and not always in the same direction.

Fears that the driving experience may be diluted by technical overkill are unfounded. What sets the Skyline apart from most other high-tech supercars is that it is as entertaining as it is able. Performance is terrific, though the car's competition ancestry is betrayed by the engine's low-rev languor. It needs to be spinning freely, if not actually raced, before the twin turbos come on strong, generating

eruptive torque (as well as a discreet snarl) that makes short work of overtaking. Even on wet roads, the Skyline's power can be safely deployed without destabilising wheel-spin. You can do things in a GT-R that would send into a spin, say, an Aston Martin Vantage costing four times as much.

There is a meaty facility about the Skyline's controls, particularly its sharp steering. It is the mark of a great car, as opposed to a good fast one, that the feedback through the wheel should draw you into the action, not distance you from it.

There's more, however, to the Skyline than dynamic prowess engendered by a strong engine, tenacious traction, mighty anti-lock brakes and amazing cornering powers.

Apart from being enormously rewarding to drive, and very safe with it, the Skyline is an eminently practical and civilised mode of transport. Although the ride on stiff, handling-biased suspension is firm to the point of being harsh, embracing seats and air conditioning ensure long-distance comfort. Other equipment includes two airbags and a CD player. There is room in the back

for two adults without cramping and the boot - its lid weighted by an adjustable "wing" that exerts downforce at speed - is generous. There is nothing special about the cabin or the conservative, mainstream dash, which could have come from any up-range executive hatchback.

Snags? Other than the price, and high running costs, the Skyline is officially available through only one distributor - St Helens-based Middlehurst Motorsport. Even with a collection and delivery service, routine maintenance could pose problems.

Specifications

Price: £50,000. Engine: 2.6 litres, six cylinders in line, 24 valves, 280bhp at 6,800rpm. Transmission: five-speed manual gearbox, four-wheel drive. Performance: top speed 155mph (governed), 0-60mph in 5.0 seconds. Fuel consumption: 21 mpg average.

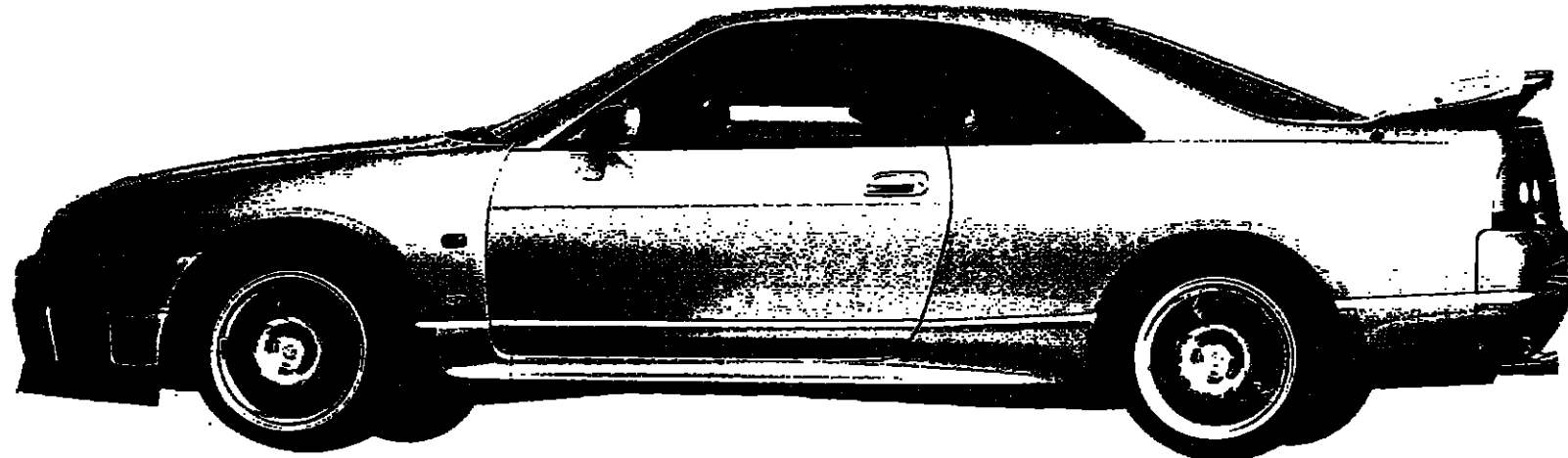
Rivals

Audi A8 4.2 Quattro, £51,896. Bigger, roomier, plusher 4x4 car than Skyline, with the emphasis on luxury and comfort rather than performance. Beautifully made.

BMW M3 3.2, £38,420. Sporting compact with strong image and tremendous performance from lovely engine. Much cheaper than Skyline, but not so fluent in its handling.

Jaguar XK8, £49,625. Elegant luxury coupé with smooth V8 engine and auto transmission. Not as fast or roomy as Skyline, but looks a million.

Porsche 911, £64,650. New 911 is faster, quieter, roomier, less flawed than the old one but it's less involving. Refinement has robbed it of character.



MY WORST CAR: RON MOODY'S FORD CONSUL

Go man, go, she said. Lulubelle had other ideas



My worst car was, as is not uncommon, my first. It was a 1951, second-hand, £400 off-white Ford Consul convertible with a dark green hood and whitewall tyres. The number plate was LBL 283, so she had to be a Lulubelle, a name justified at once by her feminine temperament.

Some might have attributed her poor compression to four delicate cylinders, but I knew she kept in third gear at a steady 25mph to look after me until I'd had more experience.

I was playing at the Apollo Theatre in London in the intimate revue *For Amusement Only*, and decided to drive in for a matinee through Berwick

Street market. Lulubelle was deeply offended at having to rub shoulders with the common coster barrows and nudged them imperiously out of the way. The costers swore at her and threatened her bonnet but I chivalrously took the blame and paid to have the first of her many dented doors repaired.

After the Apollo run, we drove off on a provincial tour. She floated between theatres like a bird but if I so much as took one member of the cast on board, she rumbled and juddered and steamed and stalled. As for pulling the birds, the purpose for which white convertibles with whitewall tyres were designed, Lulubelle proved

possessive and impossible.

My first date was a Canadian girl who asked me why I travelled all the time at 25mph and in third gear. I said the Lulubelle liked it, and never saw her again. Another girl leapt into my flashy front seat after a party and said "Go, man, go!" That didn't last either. It was about this time that Lulubelle exposed her worst fault. She sulked. I accepted the occasional starter-switch seizure as unfortunate but when she became tearful and resorted to damp starts, the end was near.

After seven years I sold her in part exchange for a car named Mac, a 1959, brand new £1,300 off-white Ford Z-

diac convertible with a dark green hood and whitewall tyres. As I drove masterfully off in my shining bright, macho male knight of the road, I noticed a young student walking around Lulubelle, giving her a very ardent inspection. I swallowed a pang of jealousy and drove off.

Ron Moody has worked in showbusiness for nearly half a century. He has written several books including *Very Very Slightly Imperfect* and *The Devil You Don't*. *The Amazon Box* is his first children's book, which is published by Robson and priced at £14.95. He was talking to James Ruppert.

MOTORING

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Dear diary, I want to tell you a terrible secret ...

Writing is something everyone can do – and the benefits to your whole life can be surprising. Patricia Cleveland-Peck joined a 'creative journal' course.

With a new year comes a fresh chance to sort out your life. You know the feeling: nothing seems impossible; this will be the year to travel, ditch that hopeless man, start that new job, write that book. Some people even commit these optimistic thoughts to the pages of their brand-new diaries – but sadly, the majority of resolutions are abandoned before the month is out.

Yet, according to Simona Parker, who runs a workshop known as "creative journal", the simple expedient of writing a diary can help you to make sense of your life. The journal used in her method, however, is anything but simple, consisting of 20 separate loose-leaf sections to cover different aspects of your life and personality: Body, Work, Here and Now, Relationships, Dreams, etc.

"They are not there to classify your psyche," Simona says, "but to open doors. Each is a channel of energy, and by working in the sections, the material starts to shift and interrelate so that transformation and growth can take place and a sort of sense of one's life can emerge."

Her method owes a lot to Dr Ira Progoff, a Jungian psychologist who developed the *Intensive Journal Workshop* in America.

"He is undoubtedly the master," says Simona, "but I have taken his method out of a rather rigid framework and simplified it for our European culture." Like Progoff, she uses the principles of "depth psychology", which seeks to integrate an individual's conscious and unconscious aspects, but she brings to it a background in "transpersonal psychology". The aim is to move forward from a static position.

"When you get used to the journal," Simona explains, "you'll find that it will almost do the work by itself; the cross-references free your energy and reveal examples of the Jungian concept of synchronicity, or meaningful coincidence,

which will give you new insights. It is particularly useful in times of decision-making, transition and crisis."

This is endorsed by Liz, who has been attending Simona's workshops on and off for 10 years. "It is an extraordinarily efficient way of putting a grid over tumultuous experiences," she says. "You need a grid – it gives a purpose to your past life. It helped me when I lost my son ... it just works."

Liz, who was an English teacher, has now taken up writing: as a bonus, she finds that the journal helps with her memories. "It brings you right back into the spirit of the thing, evokes it and gives you an understanding which is quite special."

You don't need to be a great writer or even particularly literate to use this method. Negative memories of school, or the belief that only academic or "educated" people

write, can cause initial apprehension: this disappears when you realise that your journal is for your eyes only. (Simona's old journals are kept in a locked bag inside a big black trunk that dominates her sitting-room, a potent symbol if ever there were one.)

In fact, the simple act of writing itself, according to research by Gillie Bolton, of Sheffield University, can be therapeutic. Writing, she claims, is more powerful than

speech; being a solitary activity, it draws on a deeper well. She encourages people, especially those with stressful lives, to engage in personal and reflective writing. She has worked with doctors and others in caring professions, and is now involved in a project whereby they suggest therapeutic writing to their patients. Sometimes she finds that the writings "slip between the bars which a person has erected around them-

selves", and their pens write unexpected things. This is especially useful for people who find it hard to talk about their worries. She, too, emphasises the importance of privacy. What is said cannot be unsaid, but in a diary you can contradict yourself, try things out or write nonsense without the embarrassment of anyone knowing. It can, she claims, also pin things down. If you just try to think things through, your thoughts may trace familiar circles, "only to slip away with the ghost of a laugh", but if you get them down on paper, they are there to work with.

This reflective writing offers a path to the inner being through several unusual techniques. One of these, which Simona's "creative journal" method shares, is the Jung-inspired "dialoguing", in which you write down an imaginary conversation with anything or anyone of importance in your life. This permits you to "talk" to people, living or dead, with whom you have "unfinished business". Often the guilt felt after the death of a parent or other loved one can be defused in this way, and areas of conflict can be resolved. You can also "dialogue" with parts of your body – giving your lungs, for example, the chance to complain about how you "look after" them when you just must have a cigarette.

Another interesting element in the "creative journal" method is the "cross-roads" section, in which you can explore the "roads not taken", or areas of regret in your life – and, by writing about them, move on. Many of Simona's clients have found that the method leads to valuable new insights. Ann, an American who has been working with Simona sporadically for 17 years (most clients begin with the intensive weekend workshops, then return for further, one-to-one consultations when necessary), finds it "helps to give space in the world of chatter around us – it helped when my husband left me".

Simona herself is often astonished by the significance of what she has written, finding that it reveals much that would not occur to the conscious mind.

Simona Parker's "creative journal" workshops are held at 11, Brackley Road, Chiswick, London W4 (0181-995 5320).



GAMES

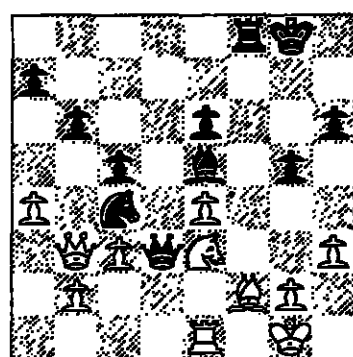
THE FIDE WORLD CHESS CHAMPIONSHIP: WILLIAM HARTSTON

Michael Adams's fine run in the World Chess Championship came to an end when he lost a rapid-play decider in the semi-final against Viswanathan Anand. Here is a blow-by-blow account of their match.

Game 1: Adams sacrificed a pawn in the opening, gaining attacking chances and pressure that lasted until the endgame. Anand needed to defend with great accuracy to save himself. The game was eventually drawn only when White's last pawn was about to disappear from the board, leaving only the two kings: White: Adams Black: Anand 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 Bb5+ Bd7 4 Bxd7+ Qxd7 5 0-0 Nc6 6 c3 Nf6 7 d4 Nxe4 8 d5 Ne5 9 Re1 Nxf3+ 10 Qxf3 Nf6 11 c4 e5 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 Bg5 Be7 14 Nc3 b6 15 Bb4 0-0 16 Qb3 Kf7 17 f4 Rad8 18 Rad1 Rg8 19 Qf3 Rge8 20 Rd3 Kf8 21 g4 Kg8 22 g5 Nf7 23 Qh5 Rf8

24 gxf6 Rxf6 25 Bxe7 Qxe7 26 Nd5 Qh4 27 Qxb4 Rxb4 28 Rxe6 Rxb6 29 Re7 Rg6+ 30 Rg3 Rg3+ 31 hgx3 Rb8 32 Rd7 Nf6 33 Nxf6+ gxf6 34 a4 Rf8 35 Rxb7 R7 36 Rb8+ Rf8 37 Rb7 R7 38 Rb8+ Rf8 39 Rb5 Kf7 40 a5 Ke6 41 a6 Ke5 42 Rb7 Kd4 43 b3 Kc3 44 Kf2 Rb8 45 Ke3 Re8 46 Kf4 Re1 47 Kf5 Ra1 48 Kxf6 Rxa6 49 Kf5 Ra1 50 Ke6 a5 51 Kxd6 a4 52 bxa4 Rxa4 53 Rb5 Rxc4 54 Rxc5 Rxc5+ 55 Kxc5 Kd3 draw

Game 2: This time it was Adams who had to defend accurately to save himself. Anand pushed hard with the white pieces, but never quite built up enough advantage to win the game. Adams managed to blockade a dangerous looking passed pawn, while also leaving himself enough flexibility to prevent an attack on his king. Drawn in 48 moves.



Game 3: The first real missed opportunity of the match. Anand played well to develop a powerful position with Black. In the diagram position, however, he gave in to the temptation to play 29...Qd2? when 30.Nf5! exf5 31.Qxc4+ solved White's problems. Instead, 29... Bd4! would have left Adams struggling. The game was eventually drawn in 35 moves.

Game 4: The last of the slow time-limit games produced the fourth draw in a row, but Adams had to demonstrate high defensive skills to save himself after his Marshall Gambit had left him a pawn behind for very little compensation. Just as his position was looking at its worst, however, he found a nice way to create some counterplay. Eventually, Anand could do no better than steer the game into a level endgame. Drawn in 46 moves.

The quick-play deciders: games five and six (25 minutes for all moves, plus 10 seconds per move completed) were both drawn, the first quietly, the second a wild affair. Games seven and eight (15 minutes, plus 10 seconds a move) were also drawn. So the stage was set for the sudden death play-off. Four minutes to White; five to Black, plus 10 seconds a move.

Game 9: White: Anand Black: Adams 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 Nf6 5 Nc3 e6 6 Nf3 Be7 7 cxd5 Nxd5 8 Be4 Nxc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 0-0 Nd7 11 Bd3 Qc7 12 Qe2 Re8 13 c4 g5 14 c5 Nf6 15 Ne5 Bd7 16 Bf4 Qc7 17 Rb1 Nd5 18 Bg3 Rf8 19 Rfcl Bf6 20 Nc4 Bxd4 21 Nd6 Qd8 22 Nxb7 Qf6 23 c6 Bc8 24 Bb3 e5 25 Be4 Be6 26 Re3 Qg5 27 Qcl Qe7 28 Qa5 Bb6 29 Qa3 Qxa3 30 Rxa3 f6 31 Nc5 Bxc5 32 Rxc5 Nc7 33 f3 a6 34 h4 Rad8 35 Rcl Rd2 36 Be1 Rxa2 37 Rxa2 Bxa2 38 Ba5 Rf7 39 Rd1 Nb5 40 Rcl Ne7 41 Rd1 Nb5 42 Rd8+ Kg7 43 Ra8 Bc4 44 Rb8 f5 45 Bc2 Bd5 46 Rb6 Nd6 47 c7 Nc8 48 Rb8 Rf8 49 Ba4 Be6 50 Bc3 Kf6 51 f4 Kf7 52 Bxc5 Ne7 53 Rd8 Nc8 54 Kf2 Ke7 55 Bc6 a5 56 Bb7 Kf7 57 Bc6 Ke7 58 Bc3 Kf7 59 Bxa5 Rg8 60 Bb4 Na7 61 Ba4 Nc8 62 Bc5 b6 63 Bb5 g5 64 f6g5 h6g5 65 h5 resigns.



Michael Adams resigning the final game of his match against Viswanathan Anand.

That well-played victory earned Viswanathan Anand a place in the final against Anatoly Karpov and a minimum of \$768,000 (£480,000) prize money. The winner of the world championship will earn \$1.37m (£850,000). As the losing

semi-finalist, Michael Adams takes home \$375,000 (£220,000), which means that the last game was worth £4,000 a move. Great fun for the spectators, but is this really any way to decide a world chess championship?

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Murray Lachlan Young, 28, poet and satirist.

As a metropolitan Londoner, I play the Tube Game. This is where you check out all the reflections in the glass of underground trains to see who you're sitting next to. Everyone in London plays this game – you'll often see businessmen ogling young ladies – but they all pretend they don't.

People do like looking at each other, but it can be dangerous. Sometimes you might feel the energy of intense weirdness coming from the person sitting two seats away, and you think: "Oh, I'll just check who that is." It's usually someone who has been waiting to catch you looking at them, so they can attack you in some way.

I was playing another of my solitary games the other day. Somebody had said something very rude to me earlier on in a meeting, and I was working on a hindsight put-down line. It was something about somebody wagging at me the blunt instrument which I presumed they thought was their wit. Something along those lines; or I could have said: "My car is parked on a double yellow line, and I'm afraid I'll have to go and talk to the traffic warden."

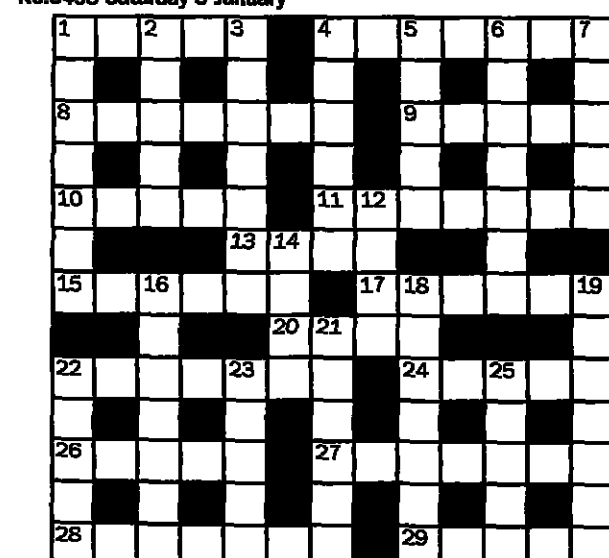
The best put-down I've ever heard was on television recently. A man on a talk-show programme asked a woman a very suggestive question, and all she said was: "Scuse me. I'm goin' go feed ma dawwwg."

I get very tense and nervous, and if you want me to be horribly western about it, then games can be a good way of letting off steam. I'm one of life's natural junkies, as it were; often in the state which most people take drugs to reach, so for me, games are a natural barbiturate. Did I mention that I've played football ever since I shook hands with the England captain and goalkeeper David Seaman?

Murray Lachlan Young's latest book, "Casual Sex and other verse", is published by Bantam Books, price £7.99.

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3498 Saturday 3 January



ACROSS

- Wait in line (5)
- Amuses greatly (7)
- Clear of blame (7)
- Seeped (5)
- Horseman (5)
- Fundamental nature (7)
- Food store (6)
- Overtures (6)
- Chances (4)
- Staying power (7)
- Greek letter (5)
- Also known as (5)
- Observed (7)
- Period from 1811 to 1820 (7)
- Long-limbed (5)

DOWN

- Disagreement (7)
- Moved gently (5)
- Extend (7)
- Greek city state (6)
- Christian symbol (5)
- Medicated sweet (7)
- Grasslike plant (5)
- Breeding establishment (4)
- Metallic element (4)
- Berkshire town (7)
- Book of psalms (7)
- Be an onlooker (5,2)
- Delicate (6)
- Flight of steps (5)
- Norwegian dramatist (5)
- Type of nut (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:

ACROSS: 1 Jam, 3 Maker (Jamaica), 7 Aviation, 8 Tuba, 9 Lost property, 10 Indeed, 12 Hasten, 14 Auld Lang Syne, 18 Burr, 19 Tribunal, 20 Layer, 21 Hod. DOWN: 1 Javelin, 2 Means, 3 Mango, 4 Kittens, 5 Robot, 6 Limped, 11 Elderly, 12 Haggis, 13 Emerald, 15 Usual, 16 Alter, 17 Youth.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South

North

♠ K Q 10 3

♥ K J 9 6

♦ 7 5 2

♣ 4 2

West

♠ 8 7 6 4

♥ 7 5

♦ K 8 3

♣ J 9 6 3

East

♠ A J 5 2

♥ 4 2

♦ J 10 9

♣ A 10 8 5

"Not much to be done there!" claimed South after going down on this deal. It was true that the adverse cards did not lie well for him, but he had missed an early point.

South opened One Heart and North contented himself with a raise to Two. South made a try for the heart game by bidding Three Diamonds and, although he had an unfavourable holding in diamonds, North went on to game on the strength of his maximum single raise on the first round.

West led the eight of spades against Four Hearts and the king lost to the ace. The jack of diamonds came back but the finesse lost and West led another diamond. South could take one discard on the queen of spades but there was no way of avoiding the loss of another diamond and a club.

So what was it that South had missed? The spade position looked clear after the lead of the eight of spades and it was his play to the first trick that proved costly. He should have played low from dummy instead of putting up the king.

East wins with the jack of spades and returns a diamond. Declarer can afford to finesse because, later on in the play, he can take a ruffing finesse in spades which will be worth two tricks to him; thus both losing diamonds can be discarded.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY

Mrs Hudson had cleared away the final remnants of our most excellent Christmas dinner and Holmes and I were relaxing in front of a roaring fire. At times such as these Holmes is wont to reach for his violin. To distract him and thus preserve the peace and calm of the evening I decided to ask him a question on his favourite game.

"Holmes, when contemplating doubling your opponent you have often talked of market losing sequences. I am still having difficulty with the concept. Perhaps you could explain it to me?"

"Certainly Watson, nothing would give me greater pleasure. Whenever you are considering doubling your opponent you must have a threat which, if carried out, would cause him to drop your double next turn. The important point to remember is that before that next turn both you and your opponent will have rolled the dice and made your moves. Thus in considering how the position may look next turn you have to consider a sequence, your own roll and your opponent's. A market losing sequence is one which changes a position from a take one turn, to a drop on the subsequent turn."

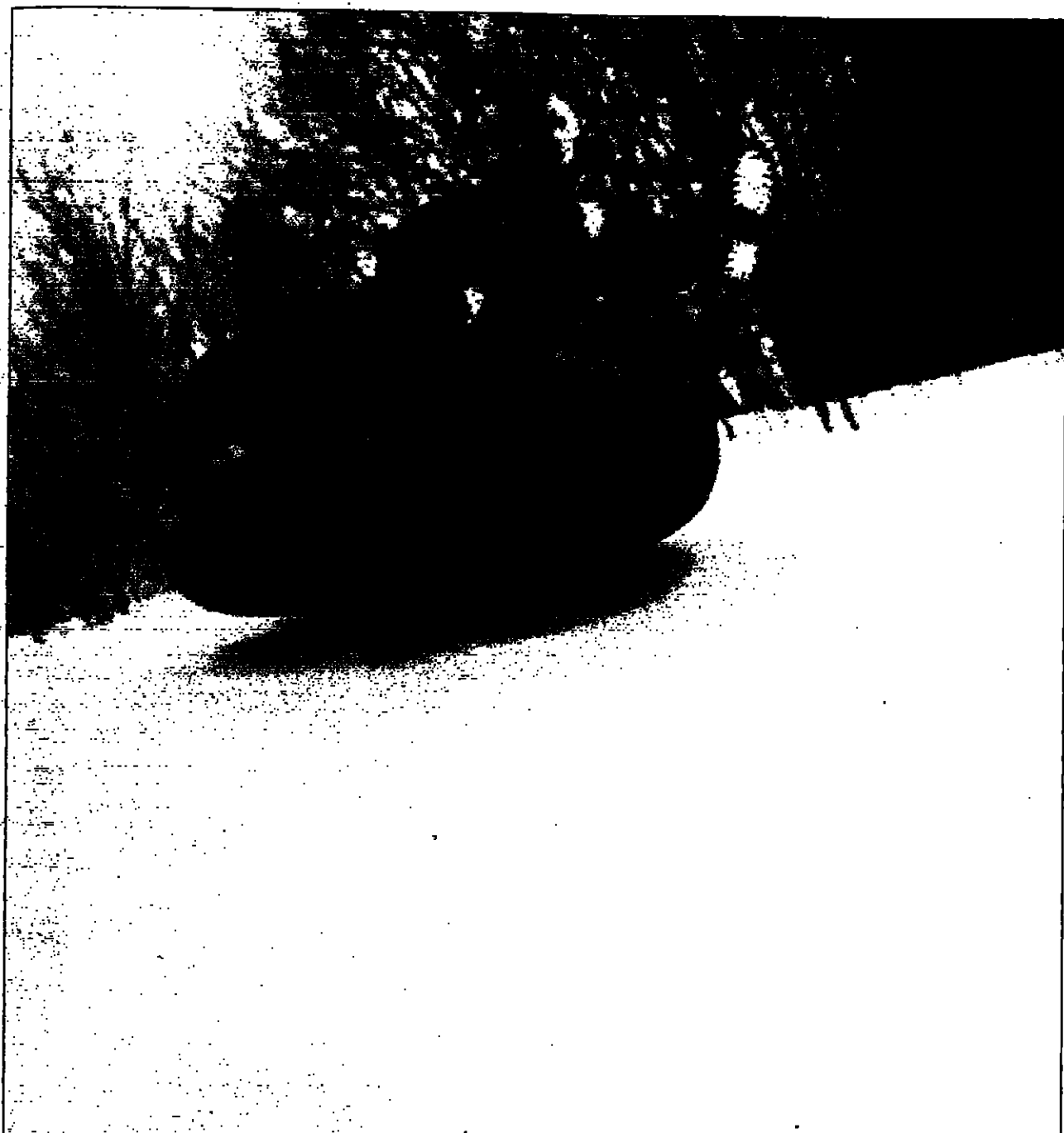
"Now I understand," I replied. "Do you have a rule of thumb for how many market losing sequences justify a double?"

"Ah, Watson, you touch on a subject close to my heart and one on which I may shortly produce a short monograph. Firstly, remember that evaluation of backgammon positions is dependent on the skill of the person performing the evaluation, so that what may be a take to one player is a drop to another. That should always be an influencing factor in your doubling decisions."

"However, let us assume that you are playing someone who you think will make rational doubling decisions. In that case my analysis leads me to believe that you should double if at least 25 per cent of sequences would lead to you losing your market. This equates quite simply to 50 per cent of your rolls followed by 50 per cent of your opponent's. I have more work to do to refine this further but I think you will find that a useful guide for the time being."

"Succinct as ever, Holmes. Now, how about a glass of post-prandial port?"

"Provided it's not too sedentary, my dear Watson."



Rubber bullets: inner tubes have only the one control - gravity



Photographs: Eric Kendall

Ride on air

Pedal the foot-pump and off we go. Eric Kendall takes a spin on traditional tobogganing and flies by the seat of his pants.

It's all in the bounce. While sledging is about sliding downhill, snow-tubing has several more dimensions: more ups, more side-to-side, more fun. Just climb aboard a large inner tube and slide down a slope, without the precision of metal runners or worrying about how to steer with your toes.

Compared to the standard craft used for descending snowy slopes - wooden sleds, plastic trays and bin liners - inner tubes are uniquely comfortable and utterly uncontrollable. They also slide on any kind of frozen surface, from ice to the kind of loose snow which bogs down an ordinary sled, leaving snow-tubers in operation on otherwise unsledgeable runs.

This makes tubes perfect for the multitude of UK snow conditions that are normally compressed into the space of 48 hours, mimicking the range of an Alpine season from winter powder to spring slush. And though this kind of versatility is generally found at the expense of performance, it's not the case with tubes: they are fast.

Don't, whatever you do, look for a big hill or a steep one. Tubes are slither than banana skins marinated in axle grease, and

go like the clappers on a moderate incline. There's a smoothness to their acceleration, the feel of a low-speed car-skid on ice where the lamppost across the street looms slowly, inevitably, hopelessly larger. With the slightest push-off you're away, the ride as perfect as mag-lev without the magnets - or the levitation - until you get sent skywards by a bump. It's a magic carpet, with only the stalk of the tube's valve to prod you back to reality.

The total lack of control and omnidirectional aspect of a tube means the right type of slope is fundamental to your survival - a gentle U-shape is ideal. Barring catastrophic mismanagement of the launch, the high sides of an appropriate slope keep you safe within the confines of the run, veering scarcely from one edge to the other but always coming back to the centre for a tree-free run-out.

Riding technique is dependent on your mood, though lying back and thinking of whatever comes to mind is the norm: climb or jump aboard, legs and arms spread like a starfish over the tube, with your bottom sticking into the centre of the hole. Aim with

your feet pointing downhill to start with. This affords terrifying glimpses of upcoming obstacles beyond your boots, but by the time you reach cruising speed and hit a truly inspiring section of terrain, you'll have spun round to see just swirling sky, maybe the top of the slope, and your life flashing in front of you.

Staying on board through bumpy technical sections is largely determined by the length of your limbs. With long arms you can hang on tight; otherwise, a reasonable-sized hillock will fire you upwards out of the tube. If you and the tube carry on in roughly the same direction, you'll land on it again, with another bounce. If not, it's the end of the comfy bit of the ride.

If you manage to stay connected throughout, undulations first cause shock ripples, then waves when you hit the big one - a pneumatic effect that could hardly be called suspension, as it amplifies rather than absorbs the shocks, taking the rough edges off, but giving the ride of your life.

Though unplanned ejections are all too easy, hailing out is virtually impossible thanks to the enveloping hold of the tube

around you - it's like trying to sit up on a half-submerged Li-Lo. And that's the essence of tubing. Light the blue touchpaper and recline - just make sure you're pointing in a safe direction to start with.

Tubing basics

Truck inner tubes are available from commercial vehicle tyre dealers - car tyre companies don't normally stock truck sizes but they'll probably know a man who does. At around £25 each, tubes represent stunning value, considering their nautical potential during the summer months.

Tubes can be inflated at a filling station or with a foot-pump on site. An electric pump (run off a car's cigarette lighter) is ideal, and can be found in quality camping and outdoor leisure shops.

Experiment with pressures according to snow conditions. The science of tubing is in its infancy, but generally, harder equals faster; you'll know you've overdone it when you hear a very loud bang. The apparently logical solution to prevent small people from falling off - a smaller tube - isn't practical due to reduced bum clearance. Stacking two

small tubes may be a possibility if you can work out how to stick them together.

Tubing dangers are minimal on the right terrain, though involuntary looping-the-loop off larger jumps usually results in head-first landings.

Clothing is as for sledging - it gets hot going back uphill. The traditional tobogganing trick of plastic bags secured over woolly mitts with elastic bands is optional.

Where to tube

Much of the UK's typical tobogganing terrain is ideal. Look for gentle slopes without major obstacles and no sharp rocks - a blowout at speed could be catastrophic.

For more organised tubing try Seefeld in Austria (local tourist office fax: 0043 5212 3355). The resort features a purpose-built run served by a lift. The bobsleigh-style track eliminates the chance of going off course or of encountering skiers, other than James Bond stunt doubles.

Blue Water Acres (fax: 001 705 635 1483) in Ontario, Canada, has a perfectly shaped natural run complete with jumps and ski-doo lift service.

Up tor and down dale in the steps of the Devon tin miners

A Devon reservoir forms the focus of a walk that recalls Sir Francis Drake, and the area's historic involvement in tin-mining. Clive Fewins takes the path to Sheepstor.

We started our walk at one of the most unusual pubs in the country - the 15th-century Royal Oak in the pretty village of Meavy, on the south-west edge of Dartmoor. Since 1894 the pub has been the property of the parish council.

Our object was to walk the hills around Burrator Reservoir, the main source of Plymouth's water. We wanted to see the two historic leats (water channels), one of them built by Sir Francis Drake in 1589, and to explore some of the industrial history of the area in which tin is said to have been mined for more than 1,000 years.

From the Royal Oak we walked towards the village school. Left of the old smithy is a gate with a sign marked to Burrator Dam. The three-quarter-mile walk there passes gently upwards through woodland. Part of the path is, in fact, the dry bed of a section of Drake's Leat.

We soon reached the road that crosses the dam. On a wall in front of us was a 1985 plaque marking the 400th anniversary of the Act authorising the construction of Drake's Leat.

Instead of crossing the dam we took the road going due north round the lake, where after about 200 yards or so we spotted our second goal: the end of Devonport

Leat, another man-made watercourse, built about 100 years after Drake's Leat to supply fresh water to the naval establishment at Devonport.

We had achieved two of our objectives in the first mile or so, but there was call for complacency. We had another seven miles, including a large tor, ahead of us.

After about another 200 yards we came to Burrator Lodge, a large Victorian house now containing offices belonging to South West Water, which owns the reservoir and much of the surrounding land. The road divides here. We took the left fork, and after a few hundred yards found ourselves on a small bridge over the Devonport

Leat. We took the signposted path into the conifer plantation on our right, and followed the swift-flowing leat.

After about a third of a mile the leat disappeared beneath a minor road. But only temporarily. We crossed a stile to reach the road and looked left, to see a flight of wooden steps and a wooden stile at the top, on the other side of the road, where we once again picked up the leat.

We passed through another plantation for about a quarter of a mile, until it joined a metalled road at a point marked on our map as Lower Lowery. We then followed the road - the leat runs beside it - which affords good views of the reservoir.

After another quarter of a mile, at a point called Cross Gate, we stopped and photographed the ancient hexagonal stone cross, then moved smartly on, straight ahead, leaving the metalled road to descend towards the reservoir.

We knew that the area to which this track led was littered with old tin-mining workings from hundreds of years before Drake dug his leat, which ceased activity only in the early years of this century. We soon saw evidence of extensive mineral workings on the slopes, now largely cleared of trees.

We continued along the track, which eventually brought us to the ruined Standlake Farm. After about

another 500 yards we saw another ruined farm ahead of us. We took a signposted path which goes sharply to the right, travelling almost back on ourselves along the bank of a small stream, through a newly-planted area.

The path descended to Norworthy Bridge, a popular beauty spot. We left the road to the rear of the car park, passing another ruined building - an old tinners' mill - on the wide, hard track to a point marked on the map as Deancombe.

After about two-thirds of a mile the path descended to a boggy area - Deancombe Marsh - where we crossed the stream on a small bridge created by a huge, flat stone and took the second of two signs to Sheepstor Common.

This was the longer of two routes to the top of our next objective - Sheep Tor - but it allowed us to see a group of spectacular old boulders that had been used as mortar stones by the tinners.

When the valley grew narrower we looked out for a small footbridge, marked on our map, which crossed the stream and led south through the woods to an area of extensive tin workings, including a fenced-off mineshaft. From here we made towards the summit of Sheep Tor. The view was severely limited by rain so we descended by the shortest route to the metalled lane - Tor Lane - leading to the comparative haven of Sheepstor Village.

Here in the churchyard is a huge granite memorial to Sir James Brooke, the first white rajah of Sarawak, who died at Sheepstor in 1868. In-

side the church you can buy a leaflet explaining how the Brooke dynasty continued to be rajahs of Sarawak until the Japanese occupation during the Second World War.

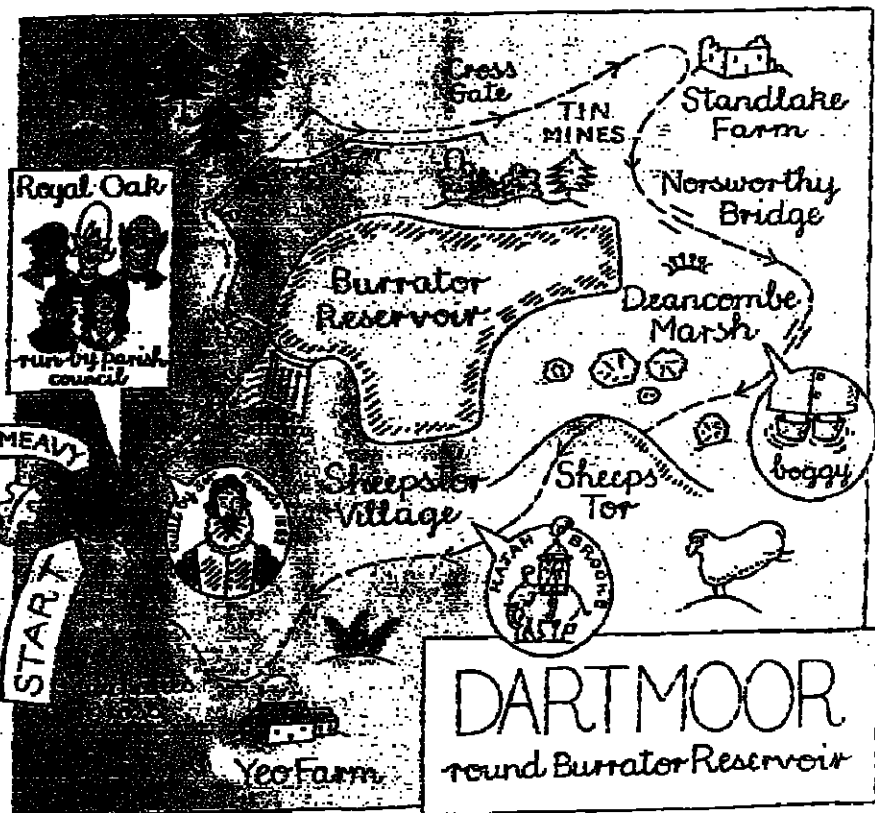
Our route back from the village lay downhill, through the glorious oak and beech Burrator Woods. We took the

path marked "Marchant's Cross", which soon left the minor road opposite Sheepstor Church and led through the woods to Yeo Farm, at the foot of the hill, and thence by a track to the ancient Marchant's Cross. Meavy and the car were just half-a-mile further on; Prince-

town, and a café, half-an-hour away. We arrived just in time for tea.

Length: About eight miles (shorter if wished)

Map: Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Outdoor Leisure, sheet 28



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INT104

Guilt-edged pain and 26 miles of regret as I run away from a New Year's revolution



MIKE ROWBOTTOM

ON FEELING BAD ABOUT THE LONDON MARATHON

When did you first feel guilty about not running the London Marathon?

My initial experience of that familiar sensation occurred back in 1982, soon after the mass-participation event had taken its grip upon the nation's collective imagination.

It was a sunny March morning, and I was out running near my home. I had reached that satisfactory stage where the sweat was on me and the legs were moving without complaint.

An elderly runner approached. He was wearing one of those aerated shirts which resemble the section on a grater for nutmeg or carrot, and he had across his forehead a broad red sweatband.

As we drew closer I noted two further details. He was doing a funny, breathing-type thing – all rhythmic and deliberate. And he was travelling faster than I was.

Upping my pace, I prepared to exchange the traditional greeting of those who meet in such circumstances – a nod of the head, maybe a clipped "Morning."

So when he enquired: "Doing the London?" I was, as it were, caught on the wrong foot. I realised immediately what my response should be – a comradely "Yep!" Or even better: "Afraid so. Westminster Bridge or bust!"

The actual response – "No" – possibly lacked a little in wit. But it had an effect.

My inquisitor said nothing derogatory. As he passed, however, he seemed to be carrying himself with just a touch more conviction, moving just a shade more easily.

I, in contrast, felt the carth tugging me down. I began to be aware of a pain in my side. I began to wonder if the section of the path I had reached was actually uphill, in real terms, even though it did not appear so. Could such a thing be possible? If all the surrounding topography, by some freak of nature, conspired to create that effect?

Or was it simply that I was feeling inferior?

Somewhere in that sudden deflation, guilt was playing its part. Similar emotions troubled

me a couple of years later when a colleague was preparing to run the event.

Dave Bedford, Britain's jack-the-lad world 10,000 metres record holder in the 1970s, once said the hardest part of his training was getting out of the front door.

I always thought Bedford was making life unnecessarily difficult for himself on this count. If the front door was such a problem, why not simply use the back door instead?

But no such weakness afflicted my friend, who was unwavering in his dedication to running 26 miles, 385 yards.

By the time the rest of us had sloped off to the canteen on our break, he would already

be pounding his way along the Embankment, or Blackfriars Bridge, or however far it was he managed to get during the one-hour break, breathing in the fresh night air, at one with himself, working towards a goal.

With his gaunt cheeks and serious Mars bar habit – this was a man making maximum use of his time and ability. And as we sat and stuffed our faces, we all felt... guilty.

Marathon guilt, though, occurs in its purest form on the race route itself. And the best place to observe it is the roadside pub.

The killer stretch of the London event comes at mile 16, when the 30-odd thousand strivers negotiate the long,

windswept loop around the Isle of Dogs.

There is naught for comfort here other than the occasional brass band and the ragged cheers of those who dot the route.

Often, you see runners reel exhaustedly from the proceedings here. Perhaps they are simply stunned by the realisation that, as the Marathon race literature points out, Canary Wharf has 4.4 million square feet of office space and is constructed with 10 different types of Italian marble.

But these individual dramas only serve to heighten the uneasy feelings which nag at those who gather on the pub forecourts clutching drinks and fags, ostensibly to cheer the

gallant foot soldiers onwards. The problem with runners is this: they make everyone else, by definition, a non-runner.

All those who stand and watch, whether they like it or not, are mutely challenged by what they witness. They tip their ash, and stare into their glasses, and mutter their traditional speaking parts: "Keep it going!" "Cheers!" "Hup-two! Hup-two!" "You're all mad!"

And the real giveaway: "I could do that." O drinkers at the Ambivalent Arms, nursing your beer and your regrets... But what has all this to do with the New Year? Very simple. Every year, without fail, I resolve to run the next London Marathon. Cheers.

Eat sandwiches in Jaws while 40ft monsters spit in the background

With promising 10-15ft swells increasing in frequency, with conflicting signals from Internet, satellite and Hawaiian soothsayers and the No 1 wave measuring buoy off Kauai vandalised, and with the North Shore rumour factory continuing to churn out ever taller stories of giant waves just over the horizon, the arguments rage on as to the exact whereabouts of the biggest wave.

Just about all coastlines in the world have their proponents, from Fiji through Easter Island to Iceland. A passing Irishman assured me that the best break in the world is to be found in Peru, at the end of a 10-hour trek through the jungle, and the only problem is you have to be equally adept with machete and board. But, even though San Francisco (and specifically Mavericks) is avowed to have been the main beneficiary so far of El Niño, the real debate boils down to a play-off between North Shore (Oahu) and Jaws (Maui).

Jaws, formerly known as "Spot X", adjacent to primo windsurfing venue Hookipa, has only sprung to prominence in this decade. Breaking just a few times a year in the extreme 30-40ft range,

it was once considered unrideable. But the advent of tow-in has changed all that. Among the elite big-wave surfers, a jet ski (with a driver), a tow-roped and a slimmer, shorter, more manoeuvrable board, has become standard equipment. The addition of a few hundred horsepower to the usual couple of arms, sling-shooting the surfer on to the face of otherwise unmakeable waves (and then leaving him to his own more traditional devices), has made accessible what Mark Foo called "the unridable realm". Thus Jaws has recently usurped the limelight in magazines, videos and, most recently, a glossy coffee-table book.

The advantage of Jaws over the North Shore outer-reef "cloud-breaks" is that it has a deep, tranquil channel where you can sit out beyond the shoulder and eat sandwiches while 40ft monsters are spitting in the background. But now the backlash has begun.

"Real Men Paddle In" is the explicit banner of Dan Merkel, veteran surf photographer and cameraman, the man who made John Milius's classic surf movie *Big Wednesday* big (mainly with footage of Pipeline and Sunset), and who has just returned to the North Shore from Jaws. With the K2 Big Wave Challenge, throwing the spotlight back on traditional paddle-power, Merkel was getting a burrito at Cholo's in Haleiwa when he came out as a powerful adversary of the Maui tow-in crew. "There's eight of them. And they're afraid of a real contest. They're worried they're going to come in second. They won't be king of the hill anymore."

For the past two years, various sponsors – from Coca-Cola to Sony – have been trying to set up a 30ft-plus tow-in contest at Jaws, based broadly on the 20ft-plus Eddie Aikau at Waimea Bay model. But the plan has run into a lot of local opposition. The Jaws Eight have staked out the spot and tried to squeeze out any would-be claimants. "They think they own the place," complains Merkel. Dave Kalama, one of the eight, has gone on record (in *Outside* magazine) as saying that (a) this is the Everest of big

wave spots, and (b) the place is too dangerous for a contest. He compares a wipe-out there to being beaten to a pulp by Bruce Lee and then finally stomped on by a Sumo wrestler for good measure. And he claims to be acting out of purely altruistic motives in blocking the event.

"That's all bull," said Merkel. "Tow-in has actually made surfing safer. The risk factor is reduced whether you're at Jaws or not. OK, a wipe-out is still a wipe-out. But the real danger in surfing is not from the wave you're on – it's from the wave coming up outside. If you're out of position, then the next wave is going to slam you. With tow-in, that never happens. The jetski just whips you out of there in a second. Anyone – anyone who knows what they're doing in big waves – can get pulled in."

Merkel argues that the quality of surfers at Jaws is not proportionate to the quality of the wave and is actually lower than on the North Shore. "They're mostly old wind-surfers I shot 12 years ago. That's why they want to keep everyone else out, so their little secret doesn't get out."

Tow-in is the steroids of surfing, producing an impressive but unearned inflationary supplement. And it's true that, hanging on to the back of a Yamaha wave-runner, I was relatively happy to get in among the huge stuff, although I nearly had a heart attack when the engine stalled. I should add, to be fair, that I've also seen a tow-in guy nearly have his leg amputated after he got tangled up in the tow rope in a big wave wipe-out.

There is a suspicion that at Jaws the frenzy of publicity has gone to the surfers' heads. A fan of Laird Hamilton (another of the Eight) once said to me that "He makes Brad Pitt look like a turkey." And now Hollywood has cashed in on this photogenic quality of both wave and wave rider by producing a full-scale feature film, *In God's Hands*, due out early in 1998, starring Jaws and the Eight and revolving around the adventures of a tow-in crew. Merkel is predictably scathing: "It had better have someone who can act in it, too."

But what really riled Merkel was that the Jaws Eight were demanding a percentage from photographers for taking their pictures. "I'm never going to pay anyone a cent for putting them on the cover of a magazine. Their sponsors are already paying them. They ought to be paying me."

There's long been a symbiotic relationship between surfers and the photographers who immortalise their ephemeral aerials and off-the-lips. The irony is that just as the tow-in heavy mob have been seeing off potential rivals, so too Merkel – the champion of the open society where Jaws is concerned – also has his own final solution to the population explosion problem among photographers: "There's way too many goofballs these days. Real Men Used to Focus. Now they're all using automatic. As soon as I get my big wave pictures in, I'm going to send them to the magazines for free. It'll burn out the opposition. This time next year, the beach'll be empty, you'll see. I'll have the place to myself."



Day trippers: Lawrie Smith, the skipper of Silk Cut, is joined by ex-Scotland rugby captain Gavin Hastings on a training run in Sydney Harbour Photograph: Allsport

Conner takes over as Toshiba skipper

The biggest name in ocean yacht racing has decided to show the rest how it is done in the Whitbread Round the World Race.

Dennis Conner is tired of seeing Toshiba among the also-rans, but as Stuart Alexander reports, it will take all the American's skill to make an impression on the outcome of the fourth leg from Sydney to Auckland which starts tomorrow.

Auckland after a five-day, 1,270-mile sprint from Sydney they will have covered half the total of 31,600 miles and accounted for 45 per cent of the points, which is why Conner, the four-times America's Cup-winner and Olympic bronze medallist, may have thought it is time to make his move.

His boat, Toshiba – in seventh place after three legs – was initially captained by the New Zealander Chris Dickson, who quit after a disappointing first leg to Cape Town led to a falling-out with Conner.

Dickson's successor, Standbridge, is now listed as co-skipper.

The 55-year-old Conner, Toshiba's syndicate chairman, has monitored progress by computer, but no longer. A veteran of the 1993-94 race, in which he co-skippered Winston on just two legs, he kept his hands-on involvement quiet until the last moment. Under race rules, teams have up until 24 hours before the start of each leg to name their full crew. He had earlier said that he did not want to disrupt the crew

if they were doing well, nor did he want any move on his part seen as a criticism of Standbridge. However, after being third on the second leg to Fremantle, Standbridge was sixth out of nine in the tight finish to the third leg to Sydney.

Conner will not be the only new face aboard Toshiba now that the Australian Barney Walker, who had a disagreement with Standbridge in Fremantle, has been recruited for his helming talents.

Frostad, meanwhile, having been

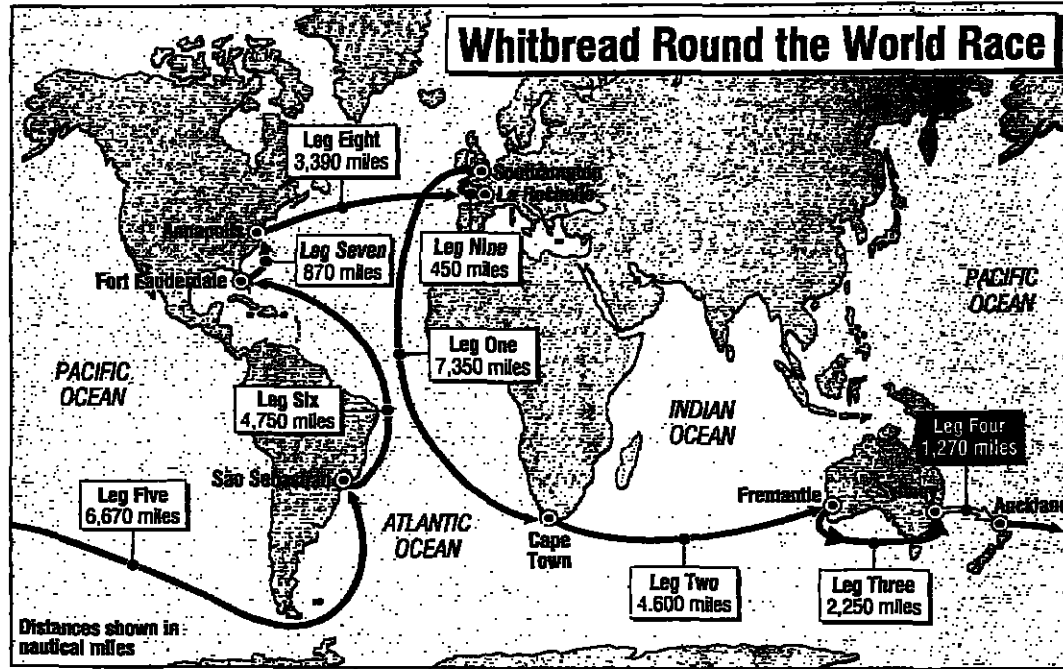
unable to persuade Torben Grael to do a second leg, welcomes back to Innovation, Robbie Naismith, who sailed the first leg, and another Kiwi, Tony Rae.

With two leg wins under his belt, Cayard is now the clear favourite to win the race. EF Language is a good, all-round boat, whereas, for instance, Dalton's Merit Cup is best at light to moderate off-the-wind work. Dalton has dropped the Italian Paolo Bassani and replaced him with Tom Dodson – the crew's 10th New Zealander.

The crew on board the British boat Silk Cut are determined to reach New Zealand first. "It will be quick and hopefully we will have plenty of breeze," said their skipper, Lawrie Smith. "We have to do well – we have something to prove."

The new dark horse is George Collins' Chessie Racing, where Paul Swan Dyke replaces the injured Rick Deppie. Collins has not only persuaded John Kostecki to stay for the next leg, but will have top match racer Gavin Brady along as well. One thing is for sure, there will be no easy points waiting in Auckland.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (third leg, 2,250 miles, Fremantle to Sydney): 1 EF Language (Swe) P Cayard 6 days, 8 hrs, 5 mins; 2 Chessie Racing (US) G Collins 6 days, 15 hrs, 21 mins; 3 Merit Cup (Morocco) G Dalton 6 days, 17 hrs, 57 mins; 4 Innovation (NZ) K Frostad 6 days, 18 hrs, 56 mins; 5 Toshiba (US) P Standbridge 6 days, 19 hrs, 40 mins; 6 Silk Cut (GB) L Smith 6 days, 20 hrs, 10 mins; 7 Chessie Racing (US) G Collins 6 days, 20 hrs, 10 mins; 8 Merit Cup (Morocco) G Dalton 6 days, 20 hrs, 10 mins; 9 Innovation (NZ) K Frostad 6 days, 20 hrs, 10 mins; 10 Toshiba (US) P Standbridge 6 days, 20 hrs, 10 mins.



QUOTES OF THE WEEK

● It sent a shiver down my back. Jürgen Klinsmann, on the welcome from Spurs fans on his return to White Hart Lane.

● The muscle is torn and there is a lot of swelling. It is a nightmare. All I want to do is play for Spurs and score goals. How can I do that when I am being told to do training which makes an injury worse? Les Ferdinand, Spurs striker, on his injured thigh and coach Christian Gross.

● In England, some players booze a lot. Those who have been out on the town and smell of booze the next morning are the ones I set out after. I chase them during training and won't leave them alone. I can't stand those players who perform below standard because they choose to lead a wild life. Dennis Bergkamp, of Arsenal.

● Knights are few and far between in football. You couldn't have a bigger honour. I'm thrilled to bits. Sir Tom Finney on his knighthood.

● Can we play you every week? Coventry City fans to Manchester United during their 3-2 victory.

● Nelson Mandela was as disappointed as I was. Ruud Gullit, Chelsea manager, on having to call off a meeting with the South African president.

● Last we forget, 96 supporters went to a match and didn't return home.

Manchester United newsletter warning that standing fans will be ejected from Old Trafford.

● It's not over until the Fat Man spins. Poster at Melbourne Cricket Ground during first Test against South Africa, on the slightly tubby Shane Warne.

● I have challenged our players to refuse their appearance money because, quite frankly, they don't deserve it. Andy Keast, Harlequins coach, on losing 38-40 to Bristol.

TODAY'S NUMBER 499

The number of teams who have been knocked out of the FA Cup so far this season, going back to the preliminary round in August, through the four qualifying rounds, and the first and second rounds proper.

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Tripping the trite fantastic in Waddell's weird and wonderful world of darts

CHRIS
MAUMESPORT
ON TV

In Sid Waddell's world, darts began in prehistoric times, when "the caveman chucked his spear at a tree because he'd missed the warthog". Whether there was one of Waddell's ancestors on hand to provide the commentary is not known, but it's a nice thought.

A trip through Waddell's mind is precisely that - trippy, man. The Voice Of Darts has been conducting his annual collision with the English language at the World Championship (Sky Sports 2). The Circus Tavern in Purfleet, Essex, is the setting and Waddell is the ringmaster.

He was in full flow from the first afternoon, with John "The Full Monty" Ferrell (dressed, sadly) taking on Rod "Prince of Style" Harrington ("dressed like a City gent who's just got a hundred grand bonus.")

As they entered to Blur's

"Song 2" - a choice all the more inspired for being unexpected - Sid was away: "Whether you live in New Orleans or Newcastle upon Tyne - this is the party!"

His associate, Dave Lanning, picked up the sartorial theme: "There's a bar off Wall Street where you must wear tie and jacket - and that's unique in this world of darts." Cue Sid's ultimate conversation-capper: "It's long time since a Welshman was kicked off the stage in an international for wearing a bobble hat and a flasher's mac."

Sometimes it is impossible to keep track of the associations his synapses conjure up. For example, when Harrington had won one of the opening legs, Waddell came up with this: "He's been having a good time of it actually - he finished the Daily Star crossword for the first time in 10 years and he's gone

up and woke the wife." Sorry?

Harrington was making the early running - or, as Waddell put it: "Rod's starting like a jackal out of the woods that hasn't had a meal for a week." As he faltered slightly - both were going through "patches the opposite of purple" - Waddell showed that he can come up with the technical stuff as well. "He's lost his line, has Rod - the stance is every bit as important as in golf, or, indeed, pole vaulting. It's that "indeed" I like.

Then, as American viewers joined, he said: "You've got to relax and be tense at the same time. It's a paradox whether you're watching in Washington DC or Washington, County Durham - our viewers in America, welcome to the Circus Tavern down by the Thames!" (This last bit delivered in an atrocious Deep South

accent filtered through his native Geordie).

As Harrington struggled to reassert himself, Waddell's preoccupation with the New World kept reappearing. "Another 60 would really chuck the garlic in the broth," he said. "He was hitting them cool as ice - now he's sweating like a donkey. It's madhouse in Madison Avenue - or here in Essex."

Waddell's weirdness is not just to do with the words he chooses (or rather, the words which choose him). His delivery, with its arbitrary whoops and growls and flashes of seemingly Hitleresque ranting, is like one of those modern classical or free jazz pieces that explores the whole instrument. A few minutes of Waddell and you feel you've experienced the entire range of the human voice. I've written before about how sports anchors learn to

break up their sentences to avoid monotony. Waddell doesn't so much break his up as hang, draw and quarter them. You wonder if perhaps he has Tourette's Syndrome.

Talking about John Lowe, for example, one word in the sentence was roared out: "Lobo showing that PROFILE that would have graced an Eruscan coin." And back talking about Harrington, he said: "He's at his best when he's playing somebody in hot form and bringing out that EXTRA GEAR that the great Bristow talks about."

If your attention wanders slightly (and I have to confess to finding the sport itself only mildly diverting), you find yourself coming in on tantalising, surreal scraps - "... Education Guardian ... Tonka toys ... tonallectomy ... no need for the Labour government to be

spending our taxes to teach people to spell darts..."

It is hard, though, not to conclude that, as with John Motson, some of Waddell's best lines are minted in advance (if I'm wrong, a grovelling acknowledgement of his improvisational capacity). We demand spontaneity from our commentators. Knowing that Motson had probably spent sleepless nights cooking up his "The Crazy Gang have beaten the Culture Club" line, delivered on the final whistle of the 1988 FA Cup final, diminished its entertainment value. And how long did he spend thinking up the line about Buchanan ascending the 39 steps of the Royal Box after the 1977 final?

So, for example, although a line like, "If he grimaces any more he'll be developing fangs and asking for a Transylvanian passport," was a splendid contribution to the match between Keith Deller and Mick Manning, it had more than a whiff of the notebook about it - as did his description of an Anglo-Scotts confrontation between Harrington and Jamie Harvey as "the Scottish broadsword against the English épée".

Still, it scarcely matters when he comes up with lines such as this, on Lowe: "When the kids have finished with the video games and they intend taking up the art of tickling tungsten, this is the man you could model yourself on."

Or my favourite, on the barrel-bellied Dave Manley: "There's a charisma and body language about him. Give me men about me who are sleek." Shakespeare said of Mark Antony. And look what happened to him.

A gala performance from the Bard of the Oche.

RUGBY UNION

Lions breathing life into Welsh dragon

After their glamour days of the 1970s and early 1980s, London Welsh had plummeted to the lower reaches of league rugby a decade later. It has been a struggle but, as David Llewellyn hears, they are on their way back. They are top of their league and today they entertain Gloucester in the Tetley's Bitter Cup.

The days when London Welsh, a dragon in exile, breathed fire over all-comers, set matches alight with glorious exploits and regularly drew crowds of 4,000 plus for a club game are long over. They disappeared with the advent of league rugby. The game's headlong rush into the embrace of professionalism heralded a sharp decline in fortunes at Old Deer Park.

In their pomp they boasted no fewer than seven Lions, including the brilliant John Dawes, captain of the triumphant tour to New Zealand in 1971 as well as John Taylor, Gerald Davies, JPR Williams, Mervyn Davies, Geoff Evans and Mike Roberts. At their height more than 25 years ago they met Gloucester at the quarter-final stage of the inaugural RFU Club Knockout Competition, as it was then known.

Three seasons later, today's visit of Gloucester in the fourth round of what is now the Tetley's Bitter Cup is a like a snapshot of past glories. Dawes

is now president of London Welsh, and together with the other half-dozen Lions legends, he is bent on restoring pride to a once great club.

A bleak midwinter last year culminated in the departure of the coach, Mike Gosling. A consortium fronted by John Taylor, the former Wales and Lions flanker, stepped in to reorganise the administration and running of the club and at the same time injected around £500,000 into the club coffers. A share issue raised a further £150,000.

While the Exiles had already hauled themselves from the murky anonymity of the former League Five (South) they were looking wobbly again some 12 months ago. Although they escaped relegation last season it was obvious they needed some disciplined guidance on the training ground and to that end the consortium approached Clive Griffiths, a former Welsh international at Union and League, to coach them.

Since his arrival in June, Welsh have hauled themselves back to the brink of better things. They currently reside - albeit by a solitary point - at the top of Jewson National League One (effectively Division Three) and the aim is to gain promotion to the Allied Dunbar Premiership Two at the end of this season. "It could be really bad for us if we don't win promotion," admits Dawes candidly. "All our hopes are on going up. It's all or nothing."

Griffiths has few doubts. He has coached the Great Britain Rugby League side and is still coach of Wales' 13-man team.

He was a full-back with Llanelli before taking the route so many have followed, joining St Helens in 1979.

"Promotion is a realistic target," says Griffiths, who will not entertain the prospect of missing out on it. "Perish the thought," he declares.

"Although we have a difficult run-in in the second half of the season, I am optimistic of our chances."

He is not so certain about how they will do against Gloucester. "We have injuries to key players," explains Griffiths, "and certainly the league has to be our priority." Dawes echoes that and, with his sights on the league, says: "The most important thing is for us not to pick up any injuries against Gloucester."

Griffiths is understandably reluctant to pick players carrying knocks just to put up a brave show when a vital league match beckons against Lydney the weekend after. For all that, he acknowledges the import of the fixture. "To start the new year with a prestigious Cup tie against Gloucester and to find ourselves at the top of the table, well, you have to pinch yourself."

For Dawes the arrival of Gloucester, "is a little bit of the past. A chance for reminiscence. It's good to have a senior club at Old Deer Park once again. Gloucester by tradition are one of the top clubs, whatever their struggles they have remained in the top flight. They bring good support."

"And while our chances of winning are not as good as theirs must be, we'll still have a good day."



Clive Griffiths, the former Welsh international and now coach at London Welsh. Since his arrival last June, there has been a revival at the club, culminating in the leadership of the Jewson National League One and a place in the fourth round of the Tetley's Bitter Cup. Photograph: Peter Jay

What Griffiths and the rest of the London Welsh hierarchy will want to avoid is a repeat of the spectacle of that first ever Cup meeting between the two sides more than a quarter of a century ago. It finished 9-4 to Gloucester and Dawes remembers: "We were well beaten. I think, apart from JPR Williams, we had our strongest side out. But typical Gloucester, they did us up front and at half-back. They just had a stranglehold on things. It was a very dark match."

Griffiths has, at least, instilled an expansive style on the club since his arrival, but he is aware of the inherent dangers of that approach. "With our style of play we will always leak points," he admits, "because we take a lot of chances, particu-

larly from deep. Most of the time they come off, but occasionally we have given away silly seven-pointers."

That is a legacy of his own playing days with Llanelli. "I was brought up on expansive running rugby in the 1970s when Wales were so successful. And the philosophies that were handed down to me by the coaches of that golden era -

Carwyn James and Norman Gale at Llanelli, Leighton Davies at Cardiff Institute - were of 15-man rugby. That is the way I think the game has to be played. I know the value of involving everyone in the game and I think everyone enjoys the game far more, players and spectators."

"After all we are in the entertainment business now. People

will come and watch a good brand of football, which excites them. And," he breaks off to chuckle, "certainly we have caused a few people's hearts to flutter these last four months."

A good show against Gloucester, capped by promotion back to the top flight where many feel they belong, should also get pulses racing again. The dragon awakes.

Gloucester armed with inside information about the Exiles

The storms of the last 36 hours have disrupted the weekend's Tetley's Bitter Cup ties. David Llewellyn discovers what's on and what's not.

The heavy rain and gales have taken their toll with three Tetley's Bitter Cup matches called off and two further games facing inspections. The postponed ties will be played on 10 January, which will cause League matches for that date to be rearranged, and in a season top heavy with fixtures the backlog can only add to individual clubs' problems.

Leicester, last year's finalists, and Sale must kick their heels after the ties at Coventry and Moseley respectively were called off, and the waterlogged West Midlands lost another match, that between Rugby and Reading. There are doubts about Bath's tie at home to London Scottish, overnight rain is the worry, and if there is any there will be inspection at 8.30 by referee Steve Lander.

There is another inspection, at 12.30pm, to see if Worcester can proceed against Bristol tomorrow, while a decision will be made tomorrow morning about another Sunday tie, that between Blackheath and Saracens.

The third Sunday tie between Waps and Harlequins goes ahead at Loftus Road. Surprisingly the majority of the Quins side who slunk off in shame after the League defeat at home to Bristol in midweek, make the game. Andy Keast, their director of rugby, said yesterday: "I haven't wielded the axe for a couple of reasons."

"One, I don't have that many fit players left and secondly, I am giving a lot of people the opportunity to put right some of the things that went wrong against Bristol."

Injuries to centre Johnny Ngauamo (shoulder) and stand-off Paul Chalfinor (dead leg)

mean places for Tulson Tallett and Thierry Lacroix, while the return to fitness of hooker Tom Billups sees Paul Delaney drop to the bench. Wing Dan Luger drops to the replacements' bench as do utility back Rob Liley and lock Luke Gross. The tight-head spot will decide later, it rests between Alan Yates and Ricky Nebbett.

Newcastle's match at home to Second Division Exeter goes ahead despite the Allied Dunbar Premiership leaders discovering that their main stand had suffered damage during the Christmas Eve gales.

Gloucester are taking no chances down at Old Deer

Park. They are determined to feature in Monday's fifth-round draw and have been doing their homework on London Welsh. The Exiles have lost just once in Jewson National League One, which they lead by a point, with the solitary slip-up at home to Newbury.

Former Gloucester coach Keith Richardson is in charge at Newbury and Richard Hill, the present Gloucester coach, has been probing for clues as to possible areas of weakness in the Exiles' game. In addition Cup-tied wing Brian Johnson, who becomes a full-time Gloucester player tomorrow after joining the Kingsholm

crew on loan from Newbury, scored a try in that match. So Gloucester are well armed with information.

They are resting their regular half-backs with Ian Sanders coming in for Scott Benton, while at stand-off Nick Osman replaces Mark Mapletott. An injury crisis at hooker, Phil Greening (knee) and Neil McCarthy (medial ligaments) are still out fit, means third-choice Chris Fortey starts the match, with Chris Hall, 18, on the bench. London Welsh are without four key backs including stand-off Craig Raymond.

There is a local derby at Franklin's Gardens where

Northampton are still without former England lock Martin Bayfield and must also do without the services of England scrum-half Matt Dawson. Bayfield, a former Bedford player, has still not fully recovered from a groin strain while Dawson suffered a shoulder injury against Waps and Saints do not want to put either player at risk at this stage of the season.

Bedford have included the South Africa flanker Rudi Strauli, 34, in their squad as cover for Junior Paramore. Former Natal lock Shaun Platford is expected to partner Scotland international Scott Murray in the second row.

Five-year ban for Welsh lock

A player with the Welsh Districts club, Cambrian, has been banned for five years after an incident involving a referee.

Lock Wayne Morgan, 35, is alleged to have assaulted the match official, Emrys Adlam, during the Rhondda club's recent match against Glyncobach. The club condemned Morgan, but insisted that there mitigating circumstances.

"In no way do we condone any assault on a referee but to be fair to Wayne he was provoked [by a Glyncobach player] throughout the match," Rob Richards, a spokesman for Cambrian, said.

HOCKEY

New York on national guard

MIM from Edinburgh will defend their title as the DTZ International Indoor Invitation Tournament gets under way today at Worcester and Kidderminster, where New York, with six players from the US National squad, could provide a stiff test.

The Women's National Indoor League also starts this weekend. Slough, the Premier Division champions, open their campaign tomorrow at Crystal Palace against Leicester and Chelmsford. Slough will be without Karen Brown, who has initially opted out of the Indoor

League, and Julia Robertson, who is on holiday. Leicester will also be short. Sarah Blanks, called into the England squad to replace Carol Voss, who has withdrawn, is on holiday and Kirsty Bowden and Purdey Miller have elected not to play. Hightown open their programme against Doncaster and Olton Terraguest. The North club have recruited Clifton's Denise Marston-Smith for the indoor season and her drag shot at corners will be a powerful weapon in Hightown's armoury. - Bill Colwill

RUGBY LEAGUE

Schofield's Brisbane blueprint

Super League's newest coach is flying around the world to learn at the feet of the most successful man in the game. Garry Schofield, the former Great Britain captain, will guide Huddersfield next season without any previous coaching experience, but he and his assistant, Phil Veivers, are travelling Brisbane to spend 10 days with the Broncos coach, Wayne Bennett. Bennett, Veivers' brother-in-law, has agreed to show the two men the methods which helped the Broncos to the Australian Super League title and the

World Club Championship last year. "We hope to come back with a lot of new ideas," said Schofield. "If you can't learn from someone like that it's time to pack it in."

The Super League champions, Bradford Bulls, have released 20 players following the decision to disband their reserve side. Oldham are still left out of the Silk Cut Challenge Cup third-round draw on Monday, despite the offer from several amateur clubs to play them in an extra qualifying tie. - Dave Hadfield

SKIING

Wiberg's Olympics in doubt

Pernilla Wiberg, the overall World Cup champion, may miss the Winter Olympics because of two broken ribs.

The fractures were revealed in X-rays taken on Thursday, several days after the Swede took a hard fall in a race in Lienz, Austria. "This is no fun at all," Wiberg said. Although it is not dangerous to compete with broken ribs, the pain could inhibit her performance.

"What will be decisive is whether Pernilla feels she can go all out," her trainer, Agneta Platter, said.

The men's overall World Cup leader, Hermann Maier, side, is looking to extend the flying start he has made this season at Kranjska Gora today and tomorrow.

The Austrian all-rounder, winner of three races already this winter, hopes to extend his already commanding lead with victory in today's giant slalom. The 25-year-old former bricklayer will face tough competition from the event's reigning world champion, Michael von Grunigen. - Peter Frisch

AMERICAN FOOTBALL

Steelers reinforced by Bettis

The Pittsburgh Steelers stand in the way of the New England Patriots' possible return to the Super Bowl today when the two teams meet at Three Rivers Stadium in the American Football Conference play-offs.

Pittsburgh, eliminated from the post-season play-offs in humiliating fashion last year by the Pats, are rested and their rushing attack should receive a boost with the return of Jerome Bettis from injury. Their rush defence is the best in the NFL. However, it will be tested by Curtis Martin, who gained 166

yards in New England's 28-3 win over the Steelers last season.

In the National Football Conference play-offs, Randall Cunningham and the Minnesota Vikings go to San Francisco after their last-second, 23-22 victory over the New York Giants. Cunningham threw a touchdown pass in the final two minutes before taking Minnesota forward for the game-winning field goal.

San Francisco, meanwhile, will be without their injured running back Garrison Hearst. But the 49ers' defence makes the club firm favourites.

JAN 10 1998

Burley blows open title race for Celtic

David McKinney
Celtic 2
Rangers 0

New Year, new script. Celtic found the key to the door of the Rangers defence to record their first win in the Old Firm derby for 11 games, yet the form of Andy Goram, the Rangers goalkeeper, was such that it took two goals of stunning quality to give Celtic the victory their overall play deserved.

Craig Burley and Paul Lambert scored in the second half to close up the title race, with Rangers now holding a one-point lead over Celtic and a two-point advantage over Hearts in the Premier Division. Apart from spells at the beginning and end of the game, the visitors failed to impose themselves, as they have done so often in these games.

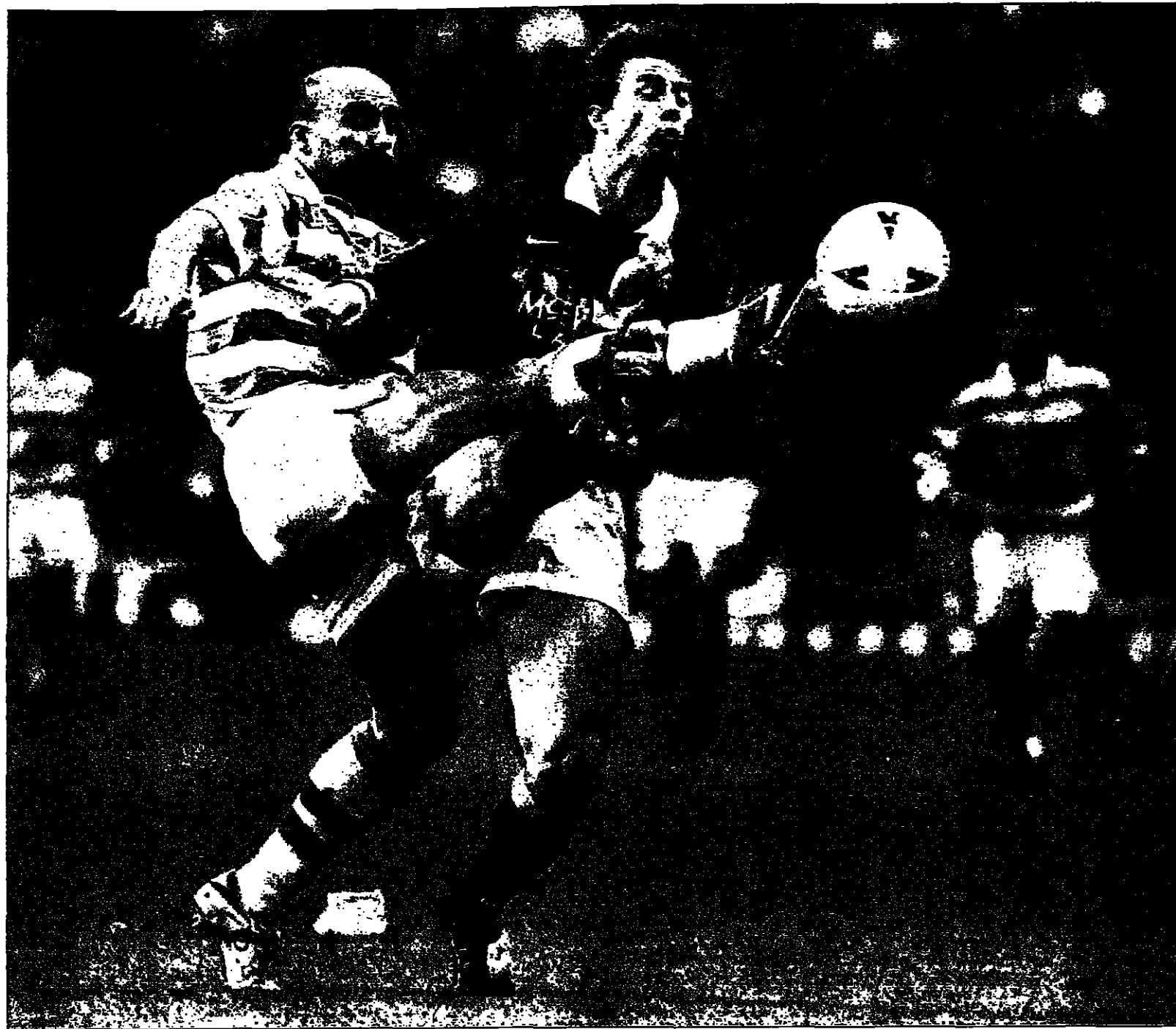
The form of Lambert and Burley, the goalscorers, as well as that of Marc Rieper, Alan Stubbs and Enrico Annoni was crucial to Celtic's victory as every one of those players gave as good a performance as they have all season. There was a starting place for the first time for Harald Brattbakk, the Austrian striker, signed for £4.2m from Rosenborg Trondheim, but he was given a close-up view of Goram's abilities, the Rangers goalkeeper once again threatening to break Celtic's heart.

He saved in the 27th minute from Brattbakk's angled shot from inside the penalty area and, with Tom Boyd delivering a pass from the left nine minutes later, Brattbakk escaped the attentions of Richard Gough, the Rangers captain, before shooting and once again watching Goram produce a superb stop.

The first half was largely a tactical battle, with both sides committing five players each to a congested midfield. The result was that, apart from Brattbakk's chances, the two goalkeepers had a relatively quiet time.

The transformation on the restart was dramatic as Celtic forced the play, squeezed the game and searched for the opening goal. Burley had a shot deflected two minutes into the second half and from the resultant corner Stubbs saw his goal-bound header diverted by the hand of Goram, who produced a fine flying save.

With Celtic continuing to



Enrico Annoni, the Celtic defender, is first to the ball to deny Rangers' Brian Laudrup in the Old Firm derby yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

dominate, Rieper headed over shortly afterwards and on the hour Goram again denied Brattbakk and Henrik Larsson saw his shot blocked on the line by Alex Cleland.

The opening goal was a well-taken effort by Burley in the 60th minute. Jackie McNamara sent a reverse pass to his midfield team-mate, and the former Chelsea player scored with a powerful angled drive into the bottom corner of the net for his eighth goal of the season.

Celtic's ascendancy faltered for a while, and with the introduction of Paul Gascoigne in the 71st minute for Jörg Albertz, Rangers threatened to take advantage of the home side's hesitancy. However, any doubts as to the destination of the points were wiped out with a cracking second goal for Celtic five minutes from time.

The move was preceded by an outstanding save by Goram, who denied Darren Jackson with a magnificent parry. But

the ball was still in play and found its way to Lambert, whose 25-yard drive crashed in off the top of the post.

There was no complaint from Walter Smith, the Rangers manager, who recognised that his side had been second best on the day. He said: "We were beaten by the better side, with Celtic looking more hungry for the points."

For Wim Jansen, the Celtic manager, the victory will justify the changes he has brought

to the club since arriving in the summer. His signings are beginning to gel and the hope of the Celtic coach is that the players will carry a new belief into the new year. True to form, however, Jansen refused to get carried away with this victory. "It is only three points, the same as any other game and there is still a long way to go before the title will be decided," he said. "Yes, I was pleased for my players and pleased with the performance, but there is a lot

of hard work still to be done."

The result at Celtic Park will ensure that with Celtic and Hearts both competing, this is one championship which will be more open than in the past when Rangers have virtually wrapped up the title by the turn of the year.

Celtic (3-5-2): Gough, Annoni, Stubbs, Rieper, McNamara, Burley, Lambert, Weighor, Boyd, Brattbakk (Jackson, 84). Rangers (3-5-2): Gough, McNamara, Boyd, Brattbakk (Jackson, 84). Substitutes not used: Dorey, Hannan.

O'Neill seeks personal hearing on misconduct charge

Martin O'Neill is to seek a personal hearing to answer a Football Association charge of misconduct.

The Leicester City manager is in the dock after an alleged confrontation in the tunnel with referee Jeff Winter after his side's recent Premiership game at home to Everton. Everton's last-minute penalty award incensed O'Neill, especially as it gave the visitors their first away win in the league for 12 months.

"I would hope that the FA want to hear my view about what happened," O'Neill said.

West Ham midfielder Steve Lomas is also up on a misconduct charge after allegedly grabbing referee Gerald Ashby during the match with Blackburn at Ewood Park on 20 December, while Manchester City striker Paul Dickov faces a similar charge over alleged remarks made to Andy D'Urso following the game against Birmingham on 13 December.

Manchester United are refusing to soften their position in the row with fans over standing at Old Trafford. United claim that fans who stand are causing

safety problems and that Trafford Council will close down parts of the ground if the problem continues, while fans have sought a meeting with the club to discuss the matter.

The club has appealed to fans for their co-operation in their latest newsletter, but they have already banned several supporters for what they term "persistent standing."

"We've taken a very relaxed attitude as far as we can, but drastic measures are now called for," the club secretary, Ken Merrett, said yesterday.

Christian Gross's fitness coach, Fritz Schmid, has gone home to Switzerland while the Department of Education and Employment reconsiders his work permit application. Schmid could be back in a fortnight if Tottenham are successful in their appeal.

Gross, who said he had had talks with Les Ferdinand over the striker's claims that he had been forced to train while unfit, committed himself to Tottenham yesterday, dispelling doubts that the Schmid problem may lead him to return to

Switzerland. "When I say yes to a club, I mean it 100 per cent," he said. "I am not a man who says after a few weeks, 'that's it'. I am a fighter."

Of the Ferdinand affair, Gross said: "The best way to handle an injury is to train the day afterwards and not to wait. You have to start as soon as you can."

Brighton's former home, the Goldstone Ground, has changed hands for more than three times the amount the club sold it for two years ago. The Seagulls sold their home

of 95 years to Chartwell Land for £7.4m to clear debts, and Abbey Life Assurance have now paid Chartwell £24m for what will soon be a retail park.

Lord Bassam, leader of Brighton and Hove Council, said he was "outraged" at the news because none of the money would find its way back to the struggling Third Division club.

"Albion needs a serious injection of cash to solve its problems," he said. "It offends me that the club will not benefit from this."

—John Curtis

SPORTING DIGEST

Basketball

Allen Iverson scored 29 points and had 11 assists as the Philadelphia 76ers recovered from a slow start to beat the Vancouver Grizzlies 115-104 on Thursday. Jim Jackson finished with 21 points, Mark Davis scored 18 and rookie Tim Thomas 15 for the 76ers, who posted a season-high points total and

improved their record to 2-2 on their seven-game road trip. NBA: Vancouver 104 Philadelphia 115.

Cricket

The former captain Andy Flower scored an unbeaten 101 to put Zimbabwe in a strong position on the first day of their three-day match against

a Sri Lanka Board XI in Matara yesterday. Flower hit nine fours in 256 minutes to become the highest scorer for Zimbabwe in their three tours to Sri Lanka. He beat the previous record of 78 scored by David Houghton during the 1983-84 series. Half-centuries by Grant Flower, Andy's brother, and the newcomer Murray Goodwin boosted the total to 371 for 6 at the close.

There will be no further play until tomorrow because today is a day of national mourning for the funeral of a senior Buddhist priest.

TOURNAMENT (results) First day of three: Sri Lanka XI 371 for 6 (88 overs). A Power XI 100 for 5 (58 overs). A Power XI 100 for 5 (58 overs). A Power XI 100 for 5 (58 overs).

Darts

SKOL WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Purbeck, Thursday's last result) Group A: Taylor (Eng) 10-5 Selby (Eng) Group B: P. Brown (Eng) 10-1 Part (Car) 3-2 Group C: H. Robinson (Eng) 10-1 A. Warrner (Eng) 3-0 Group D: P. Hirstley (Eng) 10-1 S. Hirst (Eng) 3-0.

Football

The French centre-half David Terrier, signed on a free transfer from Metz in the summer, has left West Ham by mutual consent.

Three Gillingham players, Ade Akinbiyi, Simon Radcliffe and Iffy Onuora, have been charged with misconduct by the Football Association over an alleged incident in the players' tunnel after the Nationwide League Second Division game against Luton at Kenilworth Road on 2 December.

Phil Girdle of Southend United has been charged with misconduct towards a fireman during an FA Cup match against Fulham on 6 December.

Cowthorpe City's Northern Ireland international midfielder Michael O'Neill has started a three-month loan spell with the Scottish Premier Division club Aberdeen, following the resolution of a hitch in the deal.

The Birmingham City captain, Steve Bruce, has delayed plans to move into management and will open talks shortly on a new contract with the club. The former Barcelona forward Horrie Ekelund, who played for Southampton in 1995, has returned to Britain hoping for another chance at The Dell. Ekelund scored five goals in 17 matches for Saints while on loan.

Marseilles will field their new attack of Fabrizio Ravanelli and Christophe

Dugary together for the first time in a competitive fixture in the French League Cup against Chateauxroux tomorrow. The pair have so far only played half an hour together, in a friendly against Cannes on Tuesday, following Dugary's signing from Barcelona three weeks ago.

The Italian Serie A leaders Internazionale face the unbeaten champions Juventus tomorrow as the league season resumes after the Christmas break. Inter welcome back Ronaldo following his involvement with Brazil in the Confederations Cup in Saudi Arabia last month and a trip home to Brazil. He returned to Rome in the early hours of Tuesday morning and transferred straight on to a flight to Sicily, where he scored in Inter's 3-0 defeat of Francese Avellino in a friendly there on Tuesday, before finally coming back to Milan.

Real Mallorca's Brazilian striker Paltinha is set to return home from Spain to join Flamengo, whose Brazilian international defender Junior Baleno has been linked with a move to Barcelona.

The Brazilian international Doriva has signed for the Portuguese club, Porto, in a £2.5m transfer from Atletico Madrid.

BELL'S SCOTCH WHISKY PREMIER DIVISION Celtic 2 Rangers 0 Burley 66 49350 Lambert 89

Rangers P W D L F A Pts Celtic 12 6 2 4 21 23 42 Hearts 10 3 2 5 24 26 41 Kilmarnock 10 7 4 8 33 35 25 Dundee Utd 9 6 7 30 30 24 St Johnstone 10 6 5 8 20 28 23 Dunfermline 10 5 6 8 22 37 21 Motherwell 10 5 4 11 23 32 19 Aberdeen 10 3 7 8 20 34 16 Hibernian 10 3 7 11 25 35 15

Ice hockey Rob Niedermayer scored two goals, including the game-winner on a power play 1 minute 53 seconds into overtime, to lift the Florida Panthers to a 2-1 victory over the New Jersey Devils in Thursday's National Hockey

League action. The win was only the fifth in 22 games at home for the Panthers — they wore their red away kit for the first time at home this season to try to resurrect their fortunes.

NHL: Florida 2 New Jersey 1 (ot); Washington 3 Anaheim 2; Boston 0 Ottawa 0 (ot); Chicago 3 Toronto 2 (ot); Phoenix 4 Los Angeles 1.

Rallying

PARIS-DAKAR RALLY Second stage (Narbonne to Granada with a 35km special stage) at Chateaux-Lantour: Cars 1 B Saby (Fr, Mitsubishi) 29 min 1 sec; 2 J-P Fontenay (Fr, Mitsubishi) 31 min 8 sec; 3 K. Sainio (Fin, Mitsubishi) 31 min 11 sec; 4 J. M. Sève (Sp, Toyota) 32 min 25 sec; 5 P. Wemmer (Fr, Toyota) 32 min 28 sec; 6 J. Nienhuis (Ned, Buggy) 32 min 30 sec; 7 J. Schotter (Fr, Buggy) 32 min 31 sec; 8 J. Schotter (Fr, Buggy) 32 min 31 sec; 9 J. Schotter (Fr, Buggy) 32 min 31 sec; 10 J. Schotter (Fr, Buggy) 32 min 31 sec.

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SIDELINES

Composing a team of opposites

The path Mark Hughes followed from Manchester United to Chelsea is so well worn it is possible to create a credible team from players who have represented both tomorrow's FA Cup opponents in modern times. In goal would be Alex Stepney — once game for the Blues and 433 for the Reds — with a back four of Paul Parker, Stewart Houston, Mal Donaghy and Colin Waldron.

THE EX-FILES

The artistry of Ray Wilkins (an £875,000 United buy from Chelsea), George Graham, Jim McCalliog and Mickey Thomas would compensate for lack of midfield balance. Up front, Tommy Baldwin would be an able foil for Hughes. Tommy Docherty and Dave Sexton, who each managed both clubs, could revive their manager-coach partnership.

Graham Moore, a Welsh striker in Hughes' build whom the Doc made Chelsea's record buy at £35,000 in 1961 was sold on to Matt Busby. One of United's post-Munich recruits, Stan Crowther, made the opposite move, and the freelance amateur goalkeeper, Mike Pinner, listed both Old Trafford and Stamford Bridge among his "temping" jobs in the early Sixties.

Seventy-seven years ago, Thomas Meehan, a teetotal half-back, joined Chelsea from United for a then substantial £3,500, only to die of sleeping sickness shortly after his England debut. Maxwell Woosnam, son of a former Canon of Chester and Wimbledon doubles champion in 1921, played for Chelsea before the Great War and United after it. A broken leg ended his career, coincidentally not long after his only cap.

Ten things that Crystal Palace's midfielder Itzhak Zohar might be



missing in London SE25 today following his return to Israel

- 1 An evening with Michael Barrymore at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. Less laughs than an afternoon at Selhurst, but about half the price.
- 2 The most famous twin towers in south London — the pair of television masts at Crystal Palace.
- 3 Going shopping without leaving work — in the Sainsbury's end of the ground.
- 4 The January sale at Dabners garden centre. Croydon. The perfect place to buy a new bench to spend Saturdays on.
- 5 The coaching skills of Ron Noades, one of the few chairmen with an FA coaching badge.
- 6 The Lord Napier jazz pub in Thornton Heath — the place to go on Blues night when your woman's left, your dog's died and Zohar is in the starting 11.
- 7 Frequent opportunities to go to Wembley — five visits for Palace in the 90s.
- 8 Marti Webb and Nigel from Eastenders in pantomime in Croydon.
- 9 Penalties. Although Zohar, with a 100 per cent failure rate at Palace, is capable of missing a penalty anywhere.
- 10 The rousing Selhurst Park cheers of: "There's only one Itzhak Zohar. One too many."

NAME OF THE GAME

No 16: ASTON VILLA

One of English football's oldest and most famous clubs owes its existence to a cricket team. Cricketers who attended the Villa Cross Wesleyan chapel in the Aston district of Birmingham formed the football club in 1874. Their first match, against Aston Brook St Mary's rugby team, consisted of one half of rugby and one half of football.

THIS WEEK

On 2 January 1993, the British weather did its best to curtail the FA Cup programme, when frozen pitches, hard frost and a heavy swirling fog caused a third of the third-round matches to be abandoned.

Undeterred, Second Division Hartlepool went ahead with their game against Premiership visitors Crystal Palace, despite the fact that the pitch was icy and the visibility was awful.

Two minnows travelling to Selhurst Park this weekend — Scunthorpe, who play Palace today, and Wrexham, who play Wimbledon tomorrow — can take heart from the underdog's performance five years ago.

A dubious 82nd-minute penalty decision it may have been, and one barely visible that, but Hartlepool still won 1-0. With conditions at Selhurst likely to be wet, if not waterlogged this weekend, slip-ups could happen.

HISTORY LESSON

If recent experience is any guide, Emley's UniBond League side might just have a chance against West Ham in the FA Cup this afternoon.

Last season, Harry Redknapp's team lost a third-round replay 1-0 at home to Wrexham, while another Welsh club, Newport, then of the Fourth Division, claimed West Ham's scalp in 1979.

The East London club have needed replays against lower-division opponents several times in the last 30 years.

Six years ago, Farnborough were beaten by a last-minute Trevor Morley goal in a replay at Upton Park. Twelve months earlier West Ham had needed two matches to beat Aldershot.

In 1972 Hereford, then of the Southern League, lost to a Geoff Hurst replay at Upton Park. When they met again two years later, Hereford were in the Third Division and won a replay at Edgar Street 2-1.

THIS WEEK'S TRANSFERS

Full transfers
From inactive or unlicensed lists unless stated
Alonso Asanovic (midfielder) Derby County to Napoli (it) (£350,000)
Karel Poborsky (forward) Manchester Utd to Benfica (Por)
Michael Mader (forward) Deportivo La Coruna (Sp) to Everton

Contributors: Phil Sherry, Nick Harris, Paul Newman
Readers' contributions welcome. Send to Sidelines, Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canoe Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL
e-mail address: sport@independent.co.uk

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Resort	Comment	Area	Last open	Low	High	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Soldeu	Lovely skiing on upper slopes	55%	30/12	35	80	Some cloud
AUSTRIA						
Alpbach	West snow at low levels	70%	28/12	0	55	Mild, cloudy
Braxell	Provisional snow on Zappitza	80%	28/12	5	170	Changeable
St Anton	Gelting in great shape	95%	28/12	30	200	Cloud, wind
FRANCE						
Palme	Grand Massif info now open	50%	28/12	35	130	Snow showers
Minibel	Improvement at all levels	90%	2/1	45	60	Snow
ITALY						
Cortina	Great cover from top to bottom	95%	2/1	50	200	Variable
SWITZERLAND						
Obwald	Good cover of packed powder	100%	2/1	25	110	Snow, bright
Verbier	Hard packed in places	90%	2/1	30	75	Chlorine

Snow Reports supplied by Newsfile

In the event of any discrepancy in the above, the data contained in Camelot central computer system shall prevail.

Chelsea's goalkeeping Dutchman flying in face of adversity

Ed de Goey watched Chelsea win last season's FA Cup on television in Rotterdam. When they begin their defence of the trophy at Stamford Bridge tomorrow he will be more closely involved – minding Chelsea's goal against free-scoring Manchester United. As he prepared for the third round tie, he spoke to Glenn Moore.

With his broad-shouldered gangling frame, lugubrious face, moustache, shaggy hair, high forehead and prominent eyes Ed de Goey is the nearest thing the Premiership has to Donald Sutherland. There were those, when he first started guarding the Chelsea goal, who suggested he played like the actor as well.

The goal he conceded to Southampton, when Kevin Davies caught him hesitating over a clearance, was the most obvious error but whenever the ball was in the air De Goey did not appear to inspire confidence. With Chelsea having more keepers than London Zoo, the Dutchman's chances of holding off Frode Grodas, Dmitri Kharin, Kevin Hitchcock and Nick Colgan seemed numbered.

But tomorrow he keeps goal against Manchester United as one of the Premiership's form goalkeepers. With hard work and good advice he has adapted to the more physical nature of the English game, sharpened his play and begun keeping clean sheets.

In the last 11 matches De Goey has conceded seven goals and, despite the uncertain start, his League record of 21 in 21 is bettered only by Peter Schmeichel. David James and Kasey Keller of the Premiership's regular custodians.

This achievement is all the more creditable in the context of the team. No disrespect to the admirable Nigel Martyn but it is one thing to keep goal behind a blanket of white shirts, another entirely to do so behind the gaping holes sometimes left by Ruud Gullit's cavaliers.

De Goey, who was signed last summer from Feyenoord for £2.2m, a Dutch record for a goalkeeper, admits he had early problems. "It was difficult in the beginning," he said as we sat in the canteen at Chelsea's training ground in west London. Searching for the diplomatic phrase, he explained: "Players are allowed more contact against the goalkeeper than in Holland, so I have to protect myself more. I am improving and can improve more. As for that goal against Southampton... I went to play the ball to Frank Sinclair but he was looking the other way so I took one more touch – but I did not see the striker."

"When he came he needed to adapt to the British game and he's done that," said Eddie Niedzwiecki, Chelsea's goalkeeping coach and, before injury brought a premature end to his career, their last consistently good goalkeeper.

"I know people had their question-marks over him when he first came but it always takes time: it is a lot quicker here, there are bigger crowds and probably more pressure. He's taken the challenge on board and done very well. His performances in the last couple of weeks show how he's improved. He's commanding his area better."

"I've been working with him on crosses. Over here players hit the goalkeeper a lot more than in Holland. I go to see most of the opponents so I can inform him on various aspects of the game that might occur: corners, free-kicks, whether they hit



Tall order: Ed de Goey now ranks as Chelsea's first-choice goalkeeper after an uncertain start in the Premiership

Photograph: Robert Hallam

diagonal balls into feet, the various dangers he might face in a game.

"One of the things he had not really done in Holland was work on footwork in terms of the quick movement across the goal. That's very important in the everyday game and that has developed. He was already good with his feet on the ball,

despite the Southampton goal. He has also lost a stone in weight and feels better for it."

"Ruud knew what he wanted when he signed him and had confidence in him. We've worked hard and you are now seeing an outstanding goalkeeper who is performing at the highest level."

The benchmark will, fitness permitting, be on duty at the other end tomorrow. Peter Schmeichel is the first name De Goey mentions when we talk about other goalkeepers, and Niedzwiecki added: "Schmeichel is held in great esteem. He's come here and is now dominating the art of goal-keeping. The best are judged on clean

sheets and the number of mistakes they make in a season: the men who make one or two stay at the top. Schmeichel has presence, he commands his area and consistently produces important saves. That is what we are looking to emulate."

Chelsea and United have drawn twice this season and De Goey said: "It is a tough

game but a nice one. The last couple of games we've had difficulties with small teams who press us and do not allow us to play our football. Manchester United and Chelsea are teams that want to play football so it should be good game. I would love to play at Wembley in the final. I saw it last year on television. I do most years, and the traditions, the crowd, the atmosphere, is fantastic. But while the FA Cup is important, and we want to defend it well, it is just one of four competitions we are in.

"It could be important psychologically [to win] as we've had a couple of bad results. We may be seven points behind Manchester United in the League but it is a long season. They have the Champions' League to play and have to come to Stamford Bridge."

Had it not been for a club tour by his then rivals, Ajax, De Goey might not have been at the Bridge to welcome them. Having broken into the Dutch team at the tail end of Gullit's international career in 1992 he played 27 consecutive matches, including five in the 1994 World Cup, before being dropped. Capped once in 1996 he won his 29th cap against South Africa in June, as Edwin van der Sar was in South America with Ajax. Ruud Gullit was also there, to receive an award from Nelson Mandela. De Goey played well and, on the plane back, Gullit asked him if he was interested in joining Chelsea. "I signed three days later," he said.

De Goey, 31 last month, was brought up in Gouda and played five seasons with Sparta Rotterdam before moving to Feyenoord, the club he followed as a boy. There he won a championship and four cups. But he was looking to move – Everton were interested – and feels his international chances will benefit. "I can develop my game here and there are no easy games. In Holland you go to some teams knowing you are going to win. Not here. Sometimes in Holland I did not touch the ball in the game."

"I love it here. My family are settled and the people are very kind: they give you privacy. We are in Windsor. From my curtains I can almost see the castle."

Socially, the De Goeys see Tine Andre Flo, Mark Hughes and Frode Grodas, all of whom live nearby. Ken Monkou is an old friend and dinner with the Bergkamps is in the diary. De Goey's son, three in a few months' time, is down for nursery school (but not for Eton) and De Goey is becoming so Anglicised he sometimes has trouble remembering Dutch words. He does not, incidentally, speak in Dutch to Gullit – "It would seem strange to the other players."

One adjustment that had to be made was Christmas football. The Dutch league shuts for winter and playing on Boxing Day, as important as Christmas Day in the Dutch calendar, was strange. Not that De Goey had trouble abstaining from the Christmas pleasures. He is teetotal, initially from not liking the taste, now also for fitness. "When we go out I am always driving," he said. "Everybody will be drinking and they will say, 'You can drive, Eddie. You're not drinking.'"

The autograph hunters, whom De Goey, a modest and courteous man, had earlier obliged, have now drifted away. In one corner two journalists wait to speak to Roberto Di Matteo, who is notoriously slow to emerge after training. In another Estelle Cruyff waits with their baby for Gullit. De Goey, 6ft, 6in in stockinged feet, lopes off to the showers, a quiet man preparing for a noisy afternoon tomorrow.

Bayern twice came a cropper against village sides

With all due respect to the clubs who started their qualifying campaigns last August, the FA Cup starts in earnest today.

The final itself apart, the third round of the FA Cup is the highlight of the football season. It is, as the cliché goes, the great leveller, the day on which the underdog, so revered in the English psyche, is due its day. And, despite the paucity of major giantkilling acts in the last five years, Chesterfield's antics last season restored faith in the concept of the FA Cup as the proverbial banana skin for the Premiership fat cats.

It is for that reason – particularly in today's game, where money invariably dictates the pattern of play – that we like to think of the FA Cup as unique. The English have always been renowned for having a nice line in self-deprecating humour, but when it comes to the FA Cup we certainly know how to blow our own trumpets.

Frankly, we're every right to. The FA Cup is the world's oldest domestic cup competition, unsurpassed by any domestic competition in any country anywhere in the world. Its status was underlined by the cries of "Sacrosanct!" which greeted the notion of sponsorship (at least the concession was made to call it the FA Cup, sponsored

by Littlewoods Pools, although its pioneer Charles William Alcock must still have shifted uneasily in his grave).

Nowhere else, however, do they have such qualms: hence the reason the Danes compete for the Compaq Cup, the Hungarians for the Samsung Cup and the Dutch for the Amstel Cup. However, in these, and in most other European nations, the domestic cup competition is regarded as little more than a free ticket into Europe; few have the characteristic glamour, far less the magic and the romance, of the FA Cup.

Take Belgium, where *La Coupe* was abandoned for over 30 years (between 1928 to 1953 and 1957 to 1963) until the carrot of European competition became too great to resist. However, it is still a low-key affair: the final is preceded by the women's equivalent and you can actually buy a ticket on the day.

Or Switzerland, where it's apparently customary for second and third-round ties to be held at tiny provincial grounds, with crowds to match.

Or the Netherlands, where the *KNVB Beker* is small-fry to clubs like Ajax and PSV, who, as in Italy, regard the league as the true barometer of form. Mind you, *La Coppa* in no way resembles the FA Cup: it is



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON THE
UNIQUE
ATTRACTION
OF THE
FA CUP

only competed for by *Serie A* and *Serie B* teams plus 10 from *Serie C* and totally ignores the lower echelons of the Italian League. Teams like Bologna, Vicenza and Fiorentina might regard it as a welcome chance to capture some silverware, but, for the likes of Juve, Milan and Inter, defeat in the cup hardly constitutes a crisis.

It is a similar story in France, at least according to Chris Waddle, who was in the Marseilles side which lost 1-0 to Monaco in the 1991 French Cup final. Waddle maintains the French Cup "isn't really one for the big boys; if they get

knocked out it's a scalp, but certainly not a disaster." He says that the beauty of the FA Cup lies not just in the giant-killing possibilities but in the lure of a Wembley final. "We played the French Cup final in the Parc des Princes but I'd already played there twice that season, so it meant nothing."

David and Goliath, meanwhile, obviously have no place in Spanish folklore since the Spanish Cup is traditionally dominated by the giants; for the smaller clubs it's more a money-making than a reputation-building exercise. Castilla did shock Spanish football by reaching the final in 1980, but they faced Real Madrid – which is like Manchester United playing Manchester United reserves – and a 6-1 hammering put paid to any high-falutin' ideas they might have entertained. (Spanish television, incidentally, gets amazingly high viewing figures for FA Cup matches and *Canal+*, which screened Margate's second-round match with Fulham live, will be showing three live third-round ties as well as extended highlights).

Trust the Germans to try to spoil the party, but the *DFB Pokal*, the German Cup, is admittedly the one domestic cup competition that rivals the FA Cup in the sense that it is or-

ganised to maximise the slip-up factor for the leading clubs: the seeded first round is drawn so that no two teams from the same division play each other, and the lower division side always plays at home, guaranteeing upsets galore and plenty of money at grass-roots level. Bayern Munich have twice come a cropper against village sides during the 1990s, while the Third Division side Eintracht Trier have reached this season's semi-final stage, disposing of Schalke 04 and Borussia Dortmund in the process.

Of course, last season's "family" Scottish Cup final between Kilmarnock and Falkirk breathed new life into what was a relatively tired old institution, but Rangers' Brian Laudrup, who won a Danish Cup medal with Brøndby in 1989 and a Scottish Cup medal with Rangers in 1996, still maintains there is nothing to touch the FA Cup. Laudrup says the Danish Cup "never gathers momentum until the semi-finals, the Italian Cup is a non-event and, though the Scottish Cup invokes plenty of passion, nothing can compare with the FA Cup."

If recent transfer speculation is anything to go by, Laudrup might get his chance to play in the world's greatest domestic competition sooner rather than later...

Jack and Bull still waiting to realise a golden dream

Third round day and it's Feethams, Darlington, away. As fields of dreams go, it's no Molineux and it's certainly not Wembley. But if Sir Jack Hayward is finally to see his cherished dream of Wolves lifting the FA Cup realised then we must not, dare not, lose today. For Sir Jack, approaching 75, time is slowly running out.

He still he awaits his day in the sun, £40m of the family fortune on. How he must envy Jack Walker and John Hall. True, his millions have made Molineux a modern stadium worthy of its Fifties legends; indeed, the magnificent bronze statue of the incomparable Billy Wright which stands outside the main entrance acts as a daily reminder to all who enter of their heritage and of our expectations of them. The team, though, remain infuriatingly on the fringe of making that final promotion step.

For all that, the fans have waited patiently (1983-84 was our last season in the top flight), and in considerable numbers (Molineux hasn't seen a League gate under 20,000 in over four years) – we can, if necessary, wait a few more years yet. Sir Jack Hayward cannot.

And nor, now aged 32, can Steve Bull. Bull will miss to-

day's game with a knee injury. "He hopes to make the comeback at the end of this month in the Black Country derby against West Brom – the team that sold him to us back in November 1986, in our dark days in the Fourth Division. He is the only member of the playing staff left from a time we couldn't pay the milkman. He has had any number of offers to leave in the interim; had he done so, more England caps and some winners' medals could be sitting on his mantelpiece. But they're not there. Instead, he'll be sitting at the front of the team bus today, club captain and chief cheerleader, stuck frustratingly on 299 goals in a Wolves shirt. The delay is only adding to the sense of anticipation – the scenes when the next one goes in will be the sort about which Ian Wright can only dream.

Between them, Wolverhampton's two favourite sons have given back the town a sense of pride both in itself and in its most cherished institution. If Sir Jack has renewed the infrastructure, our body – then Bull has given us back our heart and soul.

Mark McGhee's job security depends on Wolves getting promotion. With another campaign in the Division From Hell not past the half-way point, it looks like the play-offs at best. I'm not sure if I could take another failure at that hurdle (it would be our third in four anguished seasons); but God only knows what such a disappointment would mean to Messrs Hayward and Bull.

If yet another season ultimately ends in tears, few Wolves fans will be shedding them for McGhee or for themselves. But they will for two men who have each given us more than we can ever begin to repay. When we kick off that first Premiership match at Molineux, then it must be with Steve Bull standing there in the centre circle, that black No 9 resplendent on his Old Gold shirt. And when a Wolves captain lifts the FA Cup, it must be with Sir Jack standing proudly there in the Royal Box, justifiably beside himself as schoolboy excitement for once overcomes the supreme good manners of the English gent.

FAN'S EYE
VIEW
NO 238
WOLVES
BY
CHARLES ROSS



Saturday 3 January 1998

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Romance in the air as Emley dream of a Cup fling

Emley has become England's most famous village since Ambridge as its team of part-timers prepare to tackle West Ham, while any glint of a Cup will be inflicted by one Goliath on another.

As the FA Cup's annual slay ride begins in earnest at the third round stage, *Phil Shaw* examines the prospects for the great and the small and those in between.

Twenty-four hours and as many Underground stops apart, London stages two ties this weekend which epitomise in vastly different ways the charisma of the FA Cup. And no one personifies the competition's enduring appeal better than a pair of strikers from opposite ends of the football spectrum.

Glyn Hurst is a 21-year-old postman who has spent the past month dreaming of delivering the upset of the third round, and arguably of all time, when the Yorkshire village people of Emley descend on West Ham today. A failed Tottenham apprentice who was also freed by Barnsley, he claims to owe his acceleration to dodging dogs with a full sack on his back.

Mark Hughes did not fulfil his boyhood ambition either, but then four FA Cup winners' medals probably compensate for never having played for Wrexham. Tomorrow, in his first match since being named an MBE, he will be striving to

help the holders, Chelsea, take the new year's honours against the favourites, his former club Manchester United.

The size of the task facing Emley's firemen, brickies and salesmen can be gauged from the fact that they lie 11th in the UniBond League, below such hallowed names as Guiseley and Winsted, whereas West Ham stand eighth in the Premiership. Still, they will have a following of 3,000 - from a population of 1,800 - and where better than Upton Park for a G Hurst to demonstrate his scoring prowess?

The battle of Stamford Bridge, like tomorrow's meeting of Everton and Newcastle, matches two clubs who have won the coveted old pot 11 times between them. Those elitists who advocate seeding in the Cup would away with such draws at this early juncture. Yet the thought that either Chelsea or United will be left to the time-honoured pursuit of con-

centrating on the League while lesser lights edge closer to Wembley encapsulates the beauty of the competition.

Hughes, whose team-mates have been bowing in mock obeisance and calling him "Sir" since his gong was announced, said: "It's a shame one of us has to go out so soon, but if we can beat United we'll have put out the best team in the country. It's a lot like last year when we played Liverpool, and hopefully we can get the same result."

The tie, in which Denis Irwin makes his long-awaited return for the champions, is one of five where a Premiership side must go out. However, a spot of unintentional seeding has ensured that 13 of the 20 teams from the



London-bound: Emley and their supporters gather in the village yesterday before boarding coaches for today's FA Cup-tie against West Ham

Photograph: Simon Willkinson



top division are at home. Equally, while the Vauxhall Conference survivors did not receive the money-spinning trip to Old Trafford or Anfield they craved, all three have a realistic chance of going further.

Hereford, whose manager Graham Turner reckons one big draw could wipe out their debts "overnight", would doubtless be more confident of seeing off Tranmere tomorrow if the on-loan Richard Leadbeater were available. He scored a hat-trick at Kidderminster on Thursday, but Wolves do not want him cup-tied. The veteran Tony Agans stands by after a long absence through injury.

Cheltenham receive Reading just 48 hours after their 25-match unbeaten run was ruined at Yeovil, but should draw sufficient inspiration from their

first appearance at this stage since 1934 to run their First Division opponents close.

Stevenage have the hardest task, away to Swindon in a contest which pits two managerial Merseysiders, Steve McMahon and Paul Fairclough, against each other. The part-timers will be buoyed by the memory of how they scared Birmingham City 12 months ago. The occasion is also tailor-made for Ryan Kirby, who played with David Beckham in Chingford Under-9s football, to redeem himself after two dismissals in December.

Darlington's Darren Roberts was also sent off last month, for allegedly kicking the Hedsnesford keeper after scoring the Third Division club's penalty winner in the second round. Suspension would have prevented him fac-

ing his former club Wolves, only for the ban to be rescinded after a refereeing rethink.

Feethams will be an even greater culture shock for Mark McGhee's men than if they were visiting non-League territory. The players change in cabins and the showers are cold, while the demolition of the main stand means there are spectators on only three sides - not unlike Molineux before its magnificent facelift.

Any complaints Port Vale have after taking on Arsenal are unlikely to concern the facilities. Vale, who list Spurs, Southampton, Derby and Everton among their Cup victims over the past decade, go to Highbury on the back of six consecutive First Division defeats and with a solitary goal to show for 672 minutes play. "I've also had a lot of in-

juries," said their manager, John Rudge, "but somehow I think they'll all declare themselves fit for this one."

Premiership outfits at greater risk may include Aston Villa at Portsmouth, whose Cup-fighting tradition belies their current parlous position, and Sheffield Wednesday at Watford. Graham Taylor and Ron Atkinson, with half a century of accumulated experience in management between them, ought to know how to put on a cracking tie.

Nor can Leeds, having succumbed at Elland Road to both Portsmouth and Reading in knock-out football last year, feel entirely confident of overcoming Oxford, who won a replay there four years ago. Crystal Palace's wretched home record should also give Scun-

thorpe hope, while the derby atmosphere could inspire Northampton at Leicester.

Meanwhile, Newcastle face the first of two games in four days which could make or break their season - and with it Kenny Dalglish's reputation on Tyneside. After five defeats and no wins in their last seven Premiership fixtures - and 11 of the remaining 18 away - their visit to Goodison and the ensuing Coca-Cola Cup quarter-final against Liverpool could be the prelude to an unthinkable relegation fight.

Manchester City, too, may be playing for more than simply a place in tomorrow's fourth-round draw. They take on Bradford with pressure mounting on the manager, Frank Clark.

Finally, something has to give

between five-times Cup-winners West Brom and Stoke. Not only have the sides drawn twice this season - extending Albion's run without a victory against their Staffordshire rivals to 17 matches - but Albion have failed to win in the Cup for five years. Stoke, moreover, have not knocked out League opposition since 1989 and have beaten only Bath away since reaching the semi-finals in 1972.

Adding spice to the occasion, the new manager at The Hawthorns, Denis Smith, is more Potteries than Wedge-wood and proved it by fracturing no fewer than 18 bones in Stoke's service.

The breakages this weekend are, one suspects, more likely to involve hearts and dreams.

Fair times and fun for Stevenage, page 23

Crisis, what crisis, as Gullit rules out return to playing arena

Ruud Gullit yesterday ruled out FA Cup transplant surgery which would put himself back in the heart of the Chelsea team.

"I wouldn't bring myself into the starting side unless it was an emergency - and at the moment it's not an emergency," he said. "Of course I'd like to play. It's a big game, but I've only been

training for four days. I still have the vision, but not the pace or the physical condition."

Chelsea will be facing a United side on the rebound from losing to Coventry, and Gullit feels they might be distracted by other commitments.

"They've got a lot of priorities, but the Champions' League

is the main one," he said. "At Milan that we did that after we won the title for the second time. We focused on the European Cup, left the league for what it was, and won the Cup. I think that's normal and I can understand it. You can see they're more focused on those [Champions' League] occasions. That's OK."

The Arsenal manager, Arsène Wenger, rallied behind David Seaman yesterday as his side prepared to take on Port Vale. The England goalkeeper has come under fire for a series of below-par performances, but Wenger believes Seaman will use today's game to confirm his reputation. "The critics have been too

harsh," he said. "People do not expect him to make mistakes. When he does they stand out. He's feeling unlucky at the moment but I've told him to be less cautious and that means accepting the odd error."

Wenger was also keen to put some off-the-field distractions behind the Gunners after Dutch

striker Dennis Bergkamp was reported as saying he could smell drink on team-mates before training.

"There is no problem with professional behaviour at my club, and that includes drinking," Wenger said. "There might have been a problem when Dennis arrived. However, his comments do

not reflect the way I run my club. It was on the players' initiative that alcohol was banned whenever we are together as a team, even if we've won. However, we should not get carried away. The Germans drink a lot of beer and they won the World Cup. It's all about moderation."

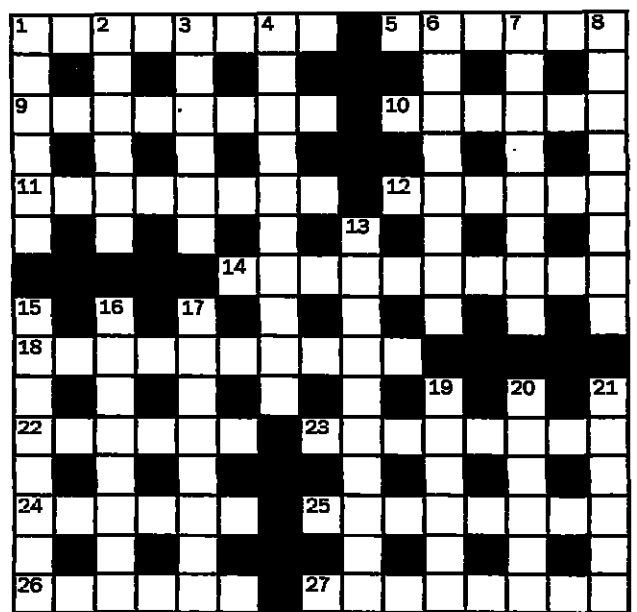
- Martin Lipton

ELEVEN
PAGES
OF
SPORT
BEGIN
ON
PAGE 14

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3498, Saturday 3 January

By Mass



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution

ROSETTA SWANSEA
E P A P A C P N
SPAINISH UGOTTIAN
U T U R C U M E
MAIDSTONE SIOUT
E A D V Z I
DOITS IMPLICATE
SHAMATEUR SUEDE
E D T A M M X
RHINE SELLSHORY
V P S I V O T I
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C S D E I K V C
ELEVEN'S SUSPECT

ACROSS

- 1 Pacifist acquires medal and order for army unit (8)
- 5 Decline, in a state, second drink (4,2)
- 9 Curb tot's running wild, restrict movement (8)
- 10 Poorly housed in extensive unfinished dwellings (6)
- 11 A setting for Egyptian customs? (4,4)
- 12 Trifle from page to amend (6)
- 14 Like a player on song? Tell us about the penalty! (2,4,4)
- 18 Affluence? Eyes treats suspiciously (4,6)
- 22 Audibly chatter in plane (6)
- 23 Home's given detachment, comprehensively (2,6)
- 24 A swell drum (6)
- 25 Dog's paraded, then given drink (8)
- 26 Pass by the Spanish church recess (6)
- 27 Briefly remove access in mission (8)

DOWN

- 1 Cuts round chunk of meat and chews (6)
- 2 Malcontent's for trial (6)
- 3 Check with a Rook at leisure (6)
- 4 Record's without effect, lacking a detailed reference (10)
- 6 Highly active, Etna, amid fumes (8)
- 7 Key for compound (8)
- 8 Seasoned meat's done with last of chilli, about pound (8)
- 13 Vehicle has English drink, round measure, in boot (4,6)
- 15 Odd repartee, fruity sort of thing (4,4)
- 16 Is one to ring a girl? (8)
- 17 American heiress I abandoned as escort (8)
- 19 Serious cut on middle of cheek (6)
- 20 Periodical carrying French article on a Spanish province (6)
- 21 Fly, this Parisian cheat (6)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardbacked copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: V Daves, Newton Abbey; J Taylor, Rotherham; T Jolly-Saunders, Hemlington; M Montague-Smith, Ashton; P Mordant, Cambridge.

TENNIS

'Queen Helen' Wills Moody dies at 92

Helen Wills Moody, who won eight Wimbledon titles, died yesterday in Carmel, California, at the age of 92.

Moody was known for hitting the ball harder than any woman, and ruled tennis in the 1920s and '30s.

Nicknamed "Little Miss Poker Face" and "Queen Helen," she won 31 major titles including Wimbledon eight times, seven US Open titles and four French Opens. She won her first US championship in 1923 and retired after winning Wimbledon in 1938.

Moody, whose trademark white eyeshade became an enduring tennis fad, learned the game without ever taking a lesson - picking it up from watching players at the Berkeley Tennis Club.

A year after she started playing at age 14, she won the first of her two girls' national titles. She was just 17 when, in 1923, she won the US women's singles championship - the youngest champion at the time.

She won an Olympic gold medal in Paris in 1924, the last time tennis was an Olympic sport until 1988. She was inducted into the International Tennis Hall of Fame in 1969.

Obituary, first section, page 16

CRICKET

Atherton's hopes for Gough

Darren Gough may still play in the West Indies this winter. As Derek Pringle reports, Michael Atherton was yesterday still holding out hope for England's best fast bowler.

like Angus Fraser who might not have been.

With the first Test not starting until 29 January, it will give ample time for the other bowlers to work out ways of doing without him. Indeed, with Gough's injury not apparently structural, it is not out of the question that he could be declared fit during the tour.

"I spoke to him not long ago," Atherton said. "He's got hope in the back of his mind and he sees a specialist in about

three or four weeks' time. If he gets the all-clear, I don't see why he can't be available for the back end of the tour. The first Test isn't for another month."

Atherton, who has spent the last three weeks holidaying in Jamaica, is adamant that England have their best chance in 30 years of beating the West Indies on home soil.

"The Pakistan result has certainly hit everyone pretty hard out there, but as ever, they are looking forward to England coming," he said. "We have an excellent chance of doing well,

and while it is difficult to predict results, recent contests between the two sides have been close and hard fought. Although they are not as strong as the sides of the Eighties, they shouldn't be underestimated at home.

"Playing at our best, as we did against Australia at Edgbaston and The Oval, we can beat anyone. However, consistency is the key, and if we play like we did in the middle of last summer, we won't beat anyone."

According to Atherton and those of his team who have played there before, the Caribbean is probably the best tour of all. But while their predecessors had bits chipped off them by an unrelenting pace attack, the current generation has grown up with an admiration and respect for the way West Indies cricket is played and watched.

It should make for a happy side and a happy captain, a consideration the selectors clearly had in mind when they confirmed Atherton as one-day captain as well. They knew that had they appointed Adam Hogg instead that it might well niggle away at him, distracting him from the main task of winning the Test series. Without the fast bowling of Darren Gough, that objective has become just a little more distant.

صلى الله عليه وسلم